

August 7, 2025

District Ranger Amy Haas
USDA Forest Service
Beartooth Ranger District
Attn: Burnt Mountain Timber Sale
6811 US Hwy 212
Red Lodge, MT 59068

Dear District Ranger Amy Haas,

On behalf of Sun Mountain Lumber, I am writing to submit comments in strong support of the Burnt Mountain Timber Sale on the Beartooth Ranger District. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this project and commend the Forest Service for advancing active forest management efforts within the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Sun Mountain Lumber is a family-owned sawmill that directly employs approximately 250 individuals at our Deer Lodge and Livingston facilities. Timber sales such as Burnt Mountain are essential not only to the continued viability of our operations, but also to the health and resilience of our region's forests and communities.

We believe the proposed action is well-aligned with the goals and objectives of the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan and clearly addresses the project's purpose and need. In particular, we want to emphasize the significance of the Burnt Mountain area's location within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). This landscape contains a growing number of residences, infrastructure, and recreational assets that are increasingly at risk due to elevated fuel loads and the potential for high-severity wildfire.

By reducing hazardous fuels, improving forest structure, and promoting more resilient vegetative conditions, this project will directly contribute to community protection, firefighter safety, and long-term forest health. The work also supports the objectives of the Forest Service's Wildfire Crisis Strategy, which prioritizes treatments in high-risk areas like this one.

We also recognize and appreciate the agency's efforts to streamline project planning through a single comment period. Increasing the pace and scale of vegetation management projects remains critical in the face of compounding threats, including insect and disease outbreaks, drought stress, and climate change. We support efforts to improve efficiency while maintaining a transparent and collaborative public process.

That said, we remain concerned about the persistent threat of litigation that continues to delay or derail urgently needed projects. As a long-standing partner to the Forest Service, Sun Mountain Lumber remains committed to working collaboratively to reduce this risk and ensure the successful implementation of the Burnt Mountain Timber Sale.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments. We value our continued partnership and look forward to contributing to the success of this and future efforts that strengthen forest stewardship and rural economies in Montana.

Sincerely,
Nick Horn
Forester
Sun Mountain Lumber