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First name: Leslie

Last name: Jakoby

Organization: La Plata County Government

Title: Environmental Specialist

Comments: Signed copy attached.

September 14, 2021

USDA Forest Service Columbine Office

Attn: James Simino

PO Box 439

Bayfield, Colorado 81122

RE: Southern HDs Landscape Restoration Environmental Assessment comment letter

Dear Mr. Simino,

La Plata County appreciates the opportunity to comment on the pre-decisional environmental assessment for the USFS Southern HDs Landscape Restoration project located in the San Juan National Forest. This work will reestablish over 35,000 acres of National Forest lands through the improvement of vegetation density and forest health, resulting in reduced forest fire fuels and improved habitat for wildlife and livestock. This project is essential to protecting the Southern HDs by reducing wildfire risks.

La Plata County supports the continued commitment for landscape restoration work. Protecting natural resources from wildfire is a priority within La Plata County. A variety of maintenance activities will be utilized ranging from vegetation thinning to prescribed burning, resulting in an improvement of the forest ecosystem, reestablishing a natural balance of species and tree age distributions, and improving resilience to disturbance. Prescribed burning will reintroduce fire in a more natural way, returning the forest to a more natural and improved fire cycle. This project will provide a controlled environment for burning and reduce risks of uncontrolled wildfires. La Plata County appreciates the communication and coordination efforts with local agencies to conduct this important landscape restoration work. Continued coordination is appreciated, as it will facilitate early and frequent public notice of operational activities associated with the project.

Sincerely,

LA PLATA COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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