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First name: Barry

Last name: Dexter

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Sam,

Stimson Lumber Company is a privately owned forest products manufacturer and timberland owner with holdings in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Stimson has significant timberland ownership within and immediately adjacent to the proposed Trojan Defense Fuels Reduction Project west of Troy, MT.

I am writing to reiterate Stimson Lumber Company's support for this project. Much of the project area adjoins Stimson ownership in the Brush Creek and Callahan Creek drainages as well as the area surrounding McConnell Mountain. This project is located within the Wildfire Crisis Strategy - Kootenai Complex and the Lincoln County Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) which was designated to identify and treat hazardous fuels surrounding communities in NW Montana. These designations make this an ideal project to further enhance cross-boundary efforts conducted on the east side of Troy recently, authorized under a Montana Forest Action Plan grant.

Stimson Lumber Company strongly supports the activity outlined in your project documentation. We encourage fuels treatments over as much of the project area as possible and specifically request that you strive to treat federal lands adjacent to Stimson's property boundaries. Effective fuels treatments include reducing stocking levels through a combination of commercial and noncommercial treatments. Reduction of basal area and removal of ladder fuels will be essential to provide optimum fire protection in the near term. We support providing shaded fuels breaks along all permanent travel routes and the use of temporary roads to access timber stands. Using a full suite of treatment options will ensure that the area transitions to a more fire resilient state. Should a fire occur, which is likely, it can be safely brought under control. This project will allow the Forest Service to ensure the safety of nearby residents, the recreating public, and agency firefighters.

Stimson Lumber Company has a network of roads accessing our timberlands in this area and we look to coordinate and cooperate with the Three Rivers Ranger District on the use of these existing roads to access the project area and for removal of forest products. I believe you are already in contact with Stimson's local timberlands manager, Bruce Rowland (406) 370-5657.

Stimson strongly supports the Kootenai National Forest's request and authorization for emergency action determination through section 40807 of the 2022 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This emergency action accurately describes the values at risk and the need for quick action to mitigate these risks. The proposed action is designed to treat and reduce fuels within the project area by shifting species composition, size class, and stand densities towards Forest Plan desired conditions. Stimson believes the more rapidly this project can be implemented, the better it will be for the national forest, Stimson's adjacent timberlands and for the surrounding community.

Stimson is encouraged by the Three Rivers Ranger District's plan to implement a model project which treats all stages of forest fuels within the WUI and the Kootenai Complex, in full alignment with the Agency's stated wildfire strategy directives. This project can serve as an example of cross-boundary coordination that seeks to not only improve the declining health of the National Forest but to provide wildfire protection to adjoining private property, local residences, and critical infrastructure. Treatments will also enhance wildlife habitat in this important area.

In closing, Stimson fully supports the proposed project and encourages the district to treat as many acres as possible. Stimson looks forward to partnering with you as an interested and affected neighbor.

Sincerely, Barry Dexter