

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/24/2024 6:00:00 AM

First name: Quintin

Last name: Woirhaye

Organization: Sun Mountain Lumber

Title: Resource Manager

Comments: Dear Thad,

On behalf of Sun Mountain Lumber, thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of support for the Pole Creek Vegetation Management project during the Objection Period.

Sun Mountain Lumber is a family-owned sawmill that provides direct employment for approximately 270 milling and logging jobs in Deer Lodge and Livingston MT. The Bighorn National Forest has always been an integral part of the timber program for the Livingston Mill as well as providing logs to the Deer Lodge facility. Sun Mountain Lumber hopes to continue the relationship and help the Bighorn National Forest in achieving its goals and objectives on the forest.

We are not writing to object to the Project, rather to support the Project going forward despite not agreeing with some aspects of the Final Decision. We support the need and objective of the Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project to improve the health and productivity of the Forest.

We believe the No Action alternative would have had catastrophic consequences for the resiliency, health, and wildfire risk of the Forest. Improving Forest health, habitat diversity, productivity, and treating fuels in the WUI are all reasons this project is needed for the Forest.

We applaud the 7,700 acres of proposed timber harvest. The local and regional infrastructure needs commercial harvest and thinning projects to survive. Without this infrastructure these projects and the objectives of the Forest Plan are impossible to achieve. Fuel reduction management in the WUI, which includes commercial harvest, mechanized thinning, firewood removal, and post and pole sales, significantly improve the health and growth of young timber stands as well as reducing fire hazard. All of these

treatments need a healthy and robust local and regional infrastructure to be viable options for the Forest. The recovery of economic value from these projects helps keep this infrastructure from disappearing.

The habitat improvement which includes 800 acres of aspen restoration and 8,300 acres of riparian restoration would improve the Forest and wildlife habitat as well as promoting diversity across the landscape. We wholeheartedly support these projects.

We would like to see more mechanical treatment options explored in the IRA's. The culling, sale, or removal of generally small diameter trees which maintain or improve roadless characteristics, reduce wildfire effects, and maintain or restore ecosystem composition and structure are often needed in the IRA's.

The use of small open areas adjacent to US Highway 16 as log staging or reload sites is very helpful for working within this area. Having these areas will be helpful for the efficient removal of timber from interior locations that are accessed by primitive roads and can only be accessed certain times of the year due to weather and other restrictions.

This project will improve the health and productivity of the forest as well as reducing the risk of wildfire. This project will provide a balanced mix of forest habitat and sustainable watershed conditions as well as benefits for the local and regional wood processing facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive comments for the Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project. We look forward to more projects on the Bighorn Ranger District.