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Organization: Buffalo Chamber of Commerce

Title: Board President

Comments:

Serving Johnson County

Buffalo Chamber of Commerce

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Mission: The Buffalo Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to promoting businesses and entrepreneurs through outreach and partnerships.

The Buffalo Chamber of Commerce supports healthy management of the Bighorn National Forest; however, we have some concerns about the proposed Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project. Tourism is a significant benefit to the community of Buffalo, and tourism dollars help support local businesses. One of Buffalo's big draws is the forest itself and its recreation opportunities, and visitors come to Buffalo to purchase gas, food, gear, and lodging. During summers, the population of Buffalo and the Bighorn Mountains swells with visitors from Wyoming, all over the U.S., and foreign countries; many of these people drive the Highway 16 Scenic Byway, while others venture farther afield, exploring areas such as Sheep Mountain Lookout, Pole Creek Road for dispersed camping opportunities, or the numerous two track roads for the more adventurous recreationists. Winter brings many visitors from out of town as well, to cross country ski at Pole Creek or the 449 area. All of these areas will be significantly affected with this proposed project.

If this project is implemented, many recreation opportunities, including cross country skiing, dispersed camping, fishing, and hunting, will be severely degraded and possibly ruined, which could have a significant impact on local businesses. If this project is completed as proposed, visitors may choose to access the Bighorn National Forest via Highway 14 instead, thus not stopping in Buffalo, not spending any money here, and not benefiting our local businesses.

The Chamber of Commerce urges you to reduce the scope of this project, specifically to remove clear cuts from areas that have high recreation participation (Pole Creek Nordic Area, 449 Nordic area, along Sheep Mountain Road, buffers along streams where people fish, and around known dispersed campsites). Many people choose to live in Buffalo and many businesses choose to operate here because of its location and quick, easy access to the Bighorn National Forest. Implementing this project as proposed will reduce the value of Buffalo residences and businesses.

Signed,

Jennifer Romanoski

Board President