

File Code: 1950

Date: August 25, 2023

Dear Objectors:

This letter is in response to objections filed on the Dead Laundry Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Decision Notice released by Andrew Skowlund, North Fork District Ranger. I have read your objections and reviewed the project record. My review of the objections was conducted in accordance with the administrative review procedures found at 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

The regulations at 36 CFR 218.8 provide for a pre-decisional administrative review process in which the objector provides sufficient narrative description of the project, specific issues related to the project, and suggested remedies that would resolve the objections. I considered issues related to the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act, climate change, watersheds, vegetation and fuels management, roads, and wildlife in my review.

OBJECTION RESOLUTION

I hosted an objection resolution meeting on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, to permit objectors to discuss the issues they raised in objection and propose potential remedies. Ranger Skowlund and I appreciated meeting with and hearing from each of you. I sincerely appreciate the time and engagement from all who were able to attend. The meeting was attended by the following:

- Brad Smith of Idaho Conservation League
- Jeff Juel of Friends of the Clearwater
- Dan Kenney
- Harry Jageman
- Andy Geissler of American Forest Resource Council

I am also very pleased that Ranger Skowlund and Brad Smith of Idaho Conservation League (ICL) were able to resolve the ICL objection following this meeting. The intent of the pre-decisional objection period is for both parties to work in good faith towards resolution and Mr. Smith and Ranger Skowlund's efforts exemplified this intent! In order to resolve ICL's objection while meeting the purpose and need for the project, Ranger Skowlund has agreed that his final decision will reflect the following changes:

- Units 15, 15X, 15Y, 16, 20A, 24, 84, 84X and 84Y will be dropped from the final decision.
- Any new or temporary roads associated with the above units will be dropped from the final decision.



- The Forest Service will partner with ICL and other interested parties to develop a separate watershed restoration project in the vicinity of the Dead Laundry Project area in order to reduce sediment delivery to streams and improve water quality and fish habitat.

REVIEWING OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

As specified at 36 CFR 218.11(b), this is my response to the remaining objections. After my review of the EA, draft Decision Notice, and project record, I find the responsible official provided an adequate analysis of issues raised and provided acceptable documentation showing compliance with applicable law, regulation, and policy. However, based on a thorough review of the objections, I am instructing the responsible official as shown below.

Objection review instructions:

1. Update and clarify the project need statement to more clearly reflect the fuels and vegetation needs in the project area.
2. Update the cumulative effects analyses to reference existing and available data on how present effects of past actions in the project area contribute to the existing conditions and how the proposed action would add to, modify or mitigate the present effects of those past actions.
3. Update the analysis throughout the fuels report to more clearly identify the information relied on for the project, including existing fuels conditions, and more clearly explains how the proposed action would alter the nature and arrangement of fuels to modify fire behavior.
4. Update the roads analysis, report, and decision with consistent terminology and ensure the decision document includes updated road mileages (within reasonable approximation) that reflects the lessened mileage due to units that were dropped based on analysis and objection resolution.
5. Update the Water Resources Analysis and EA to more clearly demonstrate project compliance with TMDL sediment targets for Deception Gulch and Appendix K of the Forest Plan (i.e., disclosure of during- and post-implementation stream reach sediment conditions).

CONCLUSION

Upon completion of these instructions, the responsible official may sign the decision notice for this project. My review constitutes the final administrative determination of the Department of Agriculture; no further review from any other Forest Service or Department of Agriculture official of my written response to your objection is available [36 CFR 218.11(b)(2)].

Sincerely,

CHERYL F. PROBERT
Forest Supervisor
cc: Kristopher Cahoon