



Matt Anderson, Forest Supervisor  
Bitterroot National Forest  
1801 N 1st Street  
Hamilton, MT 59840

Re: Comment for Bitterroot Front Project Draft Environmental Assessment

Dear Supervisor Anderson,

This letter is on behalf of Sun Mountain Lumber in Deer Lodge, MT. We are happy to see the progress on the Bitterroot Front Project Draft Environmental Assessment. We commend the Forest Service's proactive approach to addressing wildfire risks to nearby communities and promoting forest restoration in the Bitterroot National Forest. We are particularly supportive of the proposed Emergency Action Determination (EAD) under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Section 40807, as well as the employment of Condition Based National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures, as outlined in the draft assessment.

The Bitterroot Front Project's purpose and need align with our commitment to responsible forest management and the preservation of the natural resources that sustain our local economy. The multifaceted approach outlined in the project, which includes tree thinning, harvesting, and prescribed burning, speaks to the comprehensive strategies required to mitigate wildfire risks while promoting ecological resilience.

A large portion of the 143,340 acre Bitterroot Front Project area falls within the Community Wildfire Protection Zone and within wildland urban interface (WUI). The project area encompasses five of the top ten firesheds in the state of Montana and will assist future fire suppression efforts.

Sun Mountain Lumber supports the specific goals of the Bitterroot Front Project which underscore its importance:

**Reducing Wildfire Behavior and Intensity:** By strategically reducing fuel quantity and modifying fuel arrangement, the project aims to curtail the potential for devastating wildfires. This effort not only safeguards the safety of nearby communities but also protects private lands and invaluable resource values that define our region.

**Improving Forest Landscape Health and Resilience:** The project's focus on decreasing the risk of insect and disease infestation is a pivotal step towards enhancing the overall health

**Sun Mountain Lumber**  
**PO Box 389, 181 Greenhouse Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722**  
**406-846-9460 fax: 406-846-1672**



and resilience of our forest ecosystem. By addressing these threats proactively, we contribute to the longevity and vitality of our natural environment.

Enhancing First Responder Safety and Success: The project's approach to treating fuels to modify fire behavior is crucial for both first responders' safety and the effectiveness of wildfire engagement. By increasing operational opportunities, we not only safeguard those who protect us but also improve our ability to protect our valued resources.

Furthermore, we fully endorse the use of Condition Based NEPA procedures to expedite the assessment process without compromising environmental standards. The innovative approach of evaluating project conditions and adapting accordingly ensures that we strike the right balance between expediency and thoroughness.

In conclusion, Sun Mountain Lumber wholeheartedly supports the Bitterroot Front Project Draft Environmental Assessment, the proposed Emergency Action Determination (EAD) under IIJA Section 40807, and the utilization of Condition Based NEPA procedures. We are proud to collaborate with the Forest Service in our shared commitment to responsible forest management, community safety, and the preservation of our cherished landscapes. Please consider this letter as our formal endorsement of the project's objectives and strategies.

Thank you for your dedication to the well-being of our natural resources and the communities that rely on them. We look forward to witnessing the positive impact of the Bitterroot Front Project on our forest ecosystem and local economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Steinebach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sean Steinebach  
Outreach Forester

Sun Mountain Lumber