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Title: Chief Executive

Comments: I am writing my letter in support of the Butte Ranger District of the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest proposal of forest management activities around Basin Creek Reservoir.

The Basin Creek watershed has been devastated by the impact of a mountain pine beetle outbreak that caused the death of thousands of mature bull pine trees. The forest has rotten, fallen, and dead trees that are a threat to the source of drinking water for the community of Butte if a wildfire were to occur.

The condition of the watershed has become more and more deteriorated over time to the point where the fuel situation in the watershed is a dire threat to the future of this water supply,

The Basin Creek Reservoir makes up 60% of Butte's potable water supply.

If a wildfire were to start in the watershed, the slopes and hillsides would be unstable. Snow runoff or rain could cause dirt, ash, and debris to end up in the reservoir. This could block the water treatment pipes.

To protect the source of Butte's drinking water, the overgrown forest around the watershed would have to be thinned, standing and fallen dead trees would be removed, gathered into piles and burned.

Butte-Silver Bow Government has been treating the forest that is under the ownership of the local government, but a much larger effort is needed to treat the Forest Service land that surrounds the Basin Creek Reservoir. This plan is critical to minimize the impact wildfire would have on this vital water source for the community.

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation action plan identified Basin Creek Reservoir as high risk due to the potential contamination of Butte's main water source.

I unconditionally support this forest management plan.

Respectfully,

J.P. Gallagher

Chief Executive - Butte-Silver Bow Government