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Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in strong support of the Greenhorns Project on the Madison Ranger District of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. I'm a lifelong Montana resident and I grew up hunting this country; I've spent decades watching how changes on the landscape affect where deer and elk choose to live, feed, and winter. In recent years, it's been hard not to notice fewer animals using some public-land habitats that used to consistently hold game-especially where forests have grown overly dense and uniform and where active management has been limited. This project is a common-sense step toward putting habitat back on a better trajectory.

The proposed mix of treatments-thinning, prescribed fire, and associated vegetation work-will improve forest health while creating more of the open forest conditions and productive understory that deer and elk depend on. When canopy is opened and fire is reintroduced in the right places, grasses, forbs, and shrubs respond, and that translates directly into better forage and better distribution of animals across the landscape. Just as importantly, a landscape with a healthier mix of age classes and structure supports seasonal needs like winter range and calving areas by improving both nutrition and security cover nearby. From a hunter's perspective and a wildlife perspective, this is exactly the kind of work that helps keep deer and elk on public ground and makes that habitat function again.

I also encourage the Forest Service to ensure that any roads used for implementation are closed to public motorized use at the end of the project, but not permanently decommissioned where they could be valuable for future maintenance, follow-up treatments, prescribed fire operations, and adaptive management. We all know habitat work isn't "one and done"-it takes upkeep, and retaining the ability to access treatment areas efficiently (while keeping them gated/closed to protect habitat and reduce pressure) is a practical way to avoid sliding back into an ineffective, hands-off cycle. Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I respectfully urge you to move forward with the Greenhorns Project as a positive investment in deer and elk habitat on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge.