

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/11/2024 6:00:00 AM

First name: Willy

Last name: Peck

Organization: Mineral County

Title: Resource Advisor

Comments: Dear Emily: On behalf of the Mineral County Commissioners, Mineral County, MT, thanks you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments for the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Project. While we no longer have a local lumber manufacturing facility in our county, we continue to have an active forest products industry that includes Sun Mountain Lumber in Dear Lodge and Livingston, Thompson River Lumber in Thompson Falls, and Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake that continue to source logs from our area, contributing to our local economy. It is essential that we ensure these businesses have the critical resources available to sustain operation at today's level of production and look for ways to help them grow and be competitive in tomorrow's lumber market as well. While we support the effort to address forest health issues at a meaningful level, we also believe prescribed fire and forest health management should be managed together in a cohesive management strategy that includes commercial forest products removal, mechanical thinning and only then prescribed burning. Removal of commercial forest products such as sawlogs, post and poles, and firewood prior to other treatments will contribute essential revenue to help pay for the excessive cost of non-commercial treatments with prescribed fire the most expensive of all applications. Management of our National Forest should align with the Montana [Idquo]Forest action Plan[rdquo] and [Idquo]Confronting the Wildfire Crisis[rdquo] which emphasize the need to contribute logs to local and national demand for forest products while addressing our forest health issues. While we don't purport to be experts in the field of carbon sequestration, common sense tells us that removing commercial products prior to burning will contribute to carbon storage in the form of lumber and other products rather than simply burning to meet management goals. In closing, we urge you to look for opportunities to remove commercial products prior to burning. This will contribute to local economies, provide revenue for non-commercial treatments and provide opportunities for long term carbon storage. Respectfully Submitted,