



**DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE
and NATURAL RESOURCES**

3305 WEST SOUTH STREET
RAPID CITY SD 57702-8160
danr.sd.gov

March 20, 2025

Steven Kozel,
Northern Hills District Ranger
2014 North Main Street
Spearfish, SD 57783

RE: Comments on the Buffalo Forest Health Project

Dear District Ranger Kozel,

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) has reviewed the proposed Buffalo Forest Health Project and respectfully submits the following comments for consideration. DANR supports the proposed aspen treatments. We ask that you consider including a plan for browse protection such as fencing, hinging, slash retention, or grazing deferment. Use of browse protection methods will also allow for more accurate monitoring of treatments when assessing treatment effectiveness for aspen regeneration.

We support the commercial pine harvest treatments as proposed. Much of this area is accessible via traditional ground operations, and while there is very little steep slope (generally >40% slope) we ask that those areas >40% slope not be removed from ground operations. Instead consider the operational capability of the equipment with the timing of operations in the effects analysis, and if the need exists included those areas in the final proposal.

The purpose and need of the Buffalo Forest Health Project are to provide for ecological diversity. The proposed actions are designed to improve growth and yield, regeneration, establishment of new age class and reduce encroachment of conifers into aspen and meadows. The proposal doesn't specifically include or exclude spruce from the proposed management activities, and we would ask that treatments be considered in stands with spruce to increase age class diversity, improve growth and yield, and regeneration. Spruce should also be removed, along with pine in the meadow and aspen treatments.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Amanda Morrison

Amanda Morrison
Natural Resource Planner
605.394.2279
Amanda.morrison@state.sd.us