

April 14, 2025



THE Wildlife SOCIETY
South Dakota Chapter
1527 Single Tree Drive
Piedmont, SD 57769

RE: USFS Hell Canyon Ranger District Frass Draft EA Comments

Attn. Anita Swanson
Assistant NEPA Planner
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USFS Hell Canyon Ranger District
1019 North 5th Street
Custer, SD 57730

The South Dakota Chapter of THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY supports the Frass Project which proposes to mechanically treat or burn up to approximately 14,184 acres of National Forest System lands across and surrounding Bowman Ridge. The SDTWS Chapter supports silvicultural prescriptions developed for the proposed forested and fuel break treatment units; burn plans, including smoke management analysis developed prior to implementing any prescribed burning activities. We also would like to include that wildlife species utilize a variety snag habitat and various tree heights, with several bat species selecting the taller snags for roosting, especially those snags that are taller than the surrounding forest canopy. SDTWS recommends retaining a diversity of snags and snag heights within this project area.

This project will improve winter range and resource production for big game species as proposed.

- **MA 5.4 Big Game Winter Range Emphasis** (64% of NFS lands within the project area, or 9,098 acres)—*emphasis on providing high-quality winter and transitional habitat for deer and elk, high-quality turkey habitat, habitat for other species, and a variety of multiple uses.*
- **MA 5.43 Big Game and Resource Production** (36% of NFS lands within the project area, or 5,086 acres) *emphasis on wildlife*

Support includes the primary objective of this project which is to salvage dead/dying pines attacked by insects (mostly *Ips*. spp.). Additional objectives of support include installing fuel breaks and reducing hazardous fuels in the area. SDTWS requests The Hell Canyon Ranger District to follow up with reconnaissance on the beetle infestation in this project area including priority areas that have been identified for prescribed burning and fuel break treatments, which may include thinning of sawtimber and non-sawtimber, pine encroachment in meadows, and slash removal.

The South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to provide comments. Please continue to send correspondence on this proposed project and others to the South Dakota Chapter.

Respectfully,

Dennie Mann

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