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District Ranger Amy Haas

Beartooth Ranger District

6811 Highway 212 South

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Beartooth District Ranger Amy Haas,

The Custer Gallatin Working Group (CGWG) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Burnt Mountain Project (CE). The CGWG is a collaborative that works to develop agreements around priority areas and approaches for project work on the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The CGWG represents a wide range of stakeholder interests including County Commissioners, representatives of conservation NGO[s], the ski industry, agriculture and ranching, recreation, hunters, anglers, outfitters, mining, and the timber industry.

The CGWG supports the purposes of the Burnt Mountain project to improve public and firefighter safety by reducing fire intensity in the WUI which extends from the East rosebud drainage area to the West Fork of Rock Creek and is adjacent to the City of Red Lodge and Red Lodge Mountain Ski Resort. This will also increase fire control probability and opportunities and improve the health and condition of the forest ecosystem.

Recent fires in the Beartooth Range in the West Fork drainage, along the US 212 Corridor, and more dramatically from Line Creek to the Main Rock Creek drainage are a clear indication of the need to address the ever-increasing fuel loads and extreme fire danger along the face of the Beartooth Range. Risks to infrastructure and responding firefighters should be addressed promptly.

The Custer Gallatin Working Group (CGWG) was effectively engaged in the Red Lodge Mountain Fuels Reduction Project which adjoins the Burnt Mountain project and has previously recommended in coordination with forest staff potential fuels reduction projects on the Beartooth Ranger District. Members of the CGWG serving on a committee for the purpose of reviewing the Burnt Mountain Project had the opportunity to review the scoping documents. We appreciate that the draft CE includes detailed information describing the treatments proposed for each unit and locations of temporary roads. This information is important for the public to fully understand the scope and purpose of the project.

The CGWG supports the intent of the Burnt Mountain Project while reserving the ability to recommend minor adjustments.

Sincerely,

John E Prinkki, Chair, Custer Gallatin Working Group

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