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First name: Matthew

Last name: Bishop

Organization: F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber co.

Title: Forester

Comments: Attached are my comments for the Granite Moccasin Project.

January 12, 2026

Rob Davies, Hungry Horse Ranger District PO Box 190340

Hungry Horse, MT 59919 Dear Rob:

Please accept the following comments on the Granite Moccasin project on behalf of F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.

F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co., is a family-owned sawmill that operates in northwest Montana. We also have about 38,000 acres of land scattered all throughout northwest Montana. Some of which the Cyclone Bill project is adjacent to.

The 67,536-acre Granite Moccasin project area is located south of Glacier National Park in Flathead County, and spans about 40 miles along U.S. Highway 2. This narrow canyon corridor includes the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway line, a natural gas line, electrical transmission lines, and other utility and communication facilities. The Middle Fork of the Flathead River is also very popular for recreation and provides a focal point for hiking, horseback riding, hunting and float trips. About 30,380 acres of the Granite Moccasin project area are in the wildland-urban interface. The communities of Essex, Pinnacle, and Fielding lie within the project area, alongside scattered private inholdings adjacent to NFS lands. Large fires, including the Sheep (2015) and Paola Ridge (2018) fires, consumed over 5,000 acres and continue to pose significant threats to local communities and infrastructure. Stoltze has also worked on past projects in this area such as the Slippery Bill Timber Sale.

F.H. Stoltze is in support of the size of the project but would like to see more acres commercially treated within the project area. Currently only about 3.5% of the project area is being treated commercially. An increase in commercial treatment would not only help improve forest health over a larger area but it would also increase revenue for the USFS as well as make sales that are coming out of the project area more viable to more bidders locally.

There are many areas of this project that are in dire need of management due to insect and disease issues, overstocking, natural mortality, and nutrient competition. This is evident along many of the trails located in the project area. Many of the trails have an abundance of blown down trees and dead trees which make them almost impossible to access.

We would also like to mention that we appreciate the Forest's use of descriptive prescriptions on past projects and would like the Forest to keep using them on current and upcoming projects. DXP can be used across many different treatment types from commercial thins all the way up to seed tree harvests. Using this type of prescription allows the purchasers to make ground-based, real-time decisions based on the forest condition that is present at the time of harvest. This also allows the Forest to save money on setup and marking costs.

Stoltze would also like the Forest to examine the days that operations and haul are shut down due to hunting seasons and other outdoor recreation. The logging community has limited operating time at best, and further reductions such as these only make surviving in the logging business much more difficult. For example, if there are 160 working days during the year for an average logger then restricting operations during hunting season or holidays then reduces the potential number of days by 15% down to 136 days—this becomes a huge factor when trying to keep logs flowing to our mill as well as loggers trying to keep crew members, and make equipment payments. This doesn't factor in shutdowns due to inclement weather throughout the operating periods.

Stoltze also would like to remind you of the economic benefit that these projects provide. Not only to the USFS but also to the local economy and communities. Montana's forest products industry is one of the largest components of manufacturing in the state and employs roughly 7,000 workers earning about \$300 million annually. There are several sawmills and post and pole and smaller wood operations in the project vicinity. The timber products provided by the Forest Service are crucial to the health of our membership and the counties and communities where they are present. F.H. Stoltze relies heavily on the raw materials sold by the USFS and without we would not be able to provide jobs to the local community as well as wood products to the citizens of this country.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments for the Granite Moccasin Project. I look forward to commenting on the Draft EA when it is out for comment.

Sincerely,

Matthew Bishop

F.H. Stoltze Resource Forester

Attachments:

Granite Moccasin Scoping Comments.pdf