

September 28, 2016

Mr. Chip Weber
Flathead National Forest Supervisor
650 Wolfpack Way
Kalispell, MT 59901

RE: Comments on Revised Flathead National Forest Plan

Dear Mr. Weber,

Lake County government would like to submit the following comments related to the Revised Flathead National Forest Plan. Our comments are related only to those Flathead National Forest Lands that lie within the boundaries of Lake County, namely, a portion of the Swan River Corridor.

Our primary areas of interest in the draft plan are those sections that address designated wilderness areas, timber harvest, recreational opportunities, roadless areas, and public safety.

The bulleted list below summarizes our position on the draft plan:

- We do not support any alternative that creates additional acres designated as wilderness or wilderness management areas. Additional wilderness areas do not allow for the use of many forest management tools and also limits a broad number of recreational opportunities.
- We support timber harvest alternatives that provide for the highest amount of timber production and the most acres designated as suitable for timber harvest. Lands suitable for timber harvest should include activities such as firewood gathering and post and pole production. Opportunities for local firewood gathering provide heat for the majority of local homes and supports citizens in managing their household budgets. These activities help support the economy of Lake County. Timber harvest for fire management purposes is also important to our local economy and forest health.
- We support no change to the miles of mechanized trails, miles of wheeled motorized trails, over snow miles, hiking or stock trail miles. Recreation and diverse recreational opportunities are significant drivers of the Lake County economy. Reducing the diverse accessibility to forest land would reduce the number of recreational dollars flowing into Lake County's economy.
- The number of road less miles in the National Forest must not be reduced. Reduction would lead to extended periods of time to render emergency services and an inability to effectively suppress wildfires. It also increases the cost of future timber or timber management. Addressing stream crossing issues improves riparian habitat without a significant impact upon other forest management tools.
- In the event forest management is undertaken by alternate entities like state, local or tribal governments, such management will be in accordance with the Flathead National Forest plan. Other management plans will not direct management of the Flathead Forest except for consistency reviews. No local, state, tribal or other contract hiring, or use preferences will occur.

William T. Barron, Chair, Lake County Commissioners