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July 14, 2006

Mr. Bruce Ramsey
Supervisor
U.S. Forest Service
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
420 Barrett Street
Dillon, Montana 59725-3588

Dear Bruce:

Montanans depend on their national forests. Whether its timber for the mills, creeks to fish, acres to graze, lands to hunt or trails to hike, we all have an interest in the management of our national forests. This is especially true of Montana's largest national forest, the Beaverhead Deerlodge. The Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest is part of Montana's outdoor heritage, and a vital part of our economy. With so many interests in the management of the Beaverhead Deerlodge, it is important that we work together to develop a common sense forest management plan for the Beaverhead Deerlodge. That is why I applaud the "Partners" - Sun Mountain Lumber, Montana Trout Unlimited, Smurfit-Stone, Montana Wilderness Association, RY Timber, the National Wildlife Federation, Pyramid Mountain Lumber and Roseburg Forest Products - for putting their differences aside and working together.

Theirs is an unprecedented proposal. Management of our public lands is too often defined by opposition. I applaud this diverse group of timber and conservation interests for working together to produce a proposed management plan that both increases the suitable timber base, reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and protects our most pristine hunting and fishing lands for our children. However, aspects of the alternative management plan differ from the management plan proposed by the Forest Service. I also understand that the public comment period has already closed, and that some of the local county commissioners, recreation groups and other stakeholders have reservations about aspects of the Partnership's alternative management plan.

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Collaborative conservation is the future of resource management in Montana. The conservation groups and timber companies involved in the alternative management plan should be applauded for their willingness to put common sense first. We can work together to protect the national forests on which we all depend. I urge the Forest Service to review the Partnership proposal, and facilitate bringing all interested parties to the table to address their concerns.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

MSB/ws

cc: Tim Baker, Montana Wilderness Association
Thomas M. France, National Wildlife Federation
Sherm Anderson, Montana Logging Association