

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

STATE OF MONTANA

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SECRETARY OF STATE



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June 14, 2006

Gail Kimbell, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Northern Region
Federal Building
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807-7669

Dear Regional Forester Kimbell:

In late April, a diverse group of timber companies and conservation organizations released the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership Agreement, which outlines a management strategy for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Recently, I met with some of the partners to review their collaborative efforts.

I believe the strategy outlined in the Partnership proposal is a significant step forward in forest management, and I strongly urge the Forest Service to fully evaluate this compromise proposal, giving it the attention deserving of such an historic effort.

Resource issues in Montana have been divisive for too many years. The contentious debate over appropriate forest management and wilderness designation has done little, if anything, to move the state forward. It is appropriate that this accord arises out of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, a spectacular landscape that not only sustains world-class hunting and fishing, but also provides jobs for many Montanans.

The fact that timber companies and conservation organizations could come together and produce a strategy for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest represents a substantial accomplishment – one that government and community leaders should openly welcome and encourage.

Gail Kimbell, Regional Forester

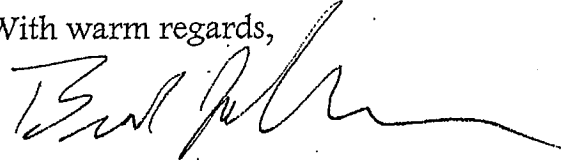
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I fully understand and appreciate that other views need to be considered, and that the Partnership proposal needs to be carefully evaluated by the agency. That said, all of us that care about the management of Montana's national forests must recognize the remarkable nature of this effort. I request that your agency expeditiously move forward to give serious consideration of this collaborative work.

Please let me know if my office can be of assistance in this effort.

With warm regards,



BRAD JOHNSON
Secretary of State

Cc: Senator Max Baucus
Senator Conrad Burns
Congressman Dennis Rehberg
Dale Bosworth, Chief, USFS
Bruce Ramsay, Supervisor, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Sherm Anderson, Sun Mountain Lumber
✓ Tim Baker, Montana Wilderness Association
Ed Regan, R-Y Timber