

**Office of  
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Granite County**

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June 27, 2006

Bruce Ramsey, Forest Supervisor  
Forest Plan Revision  
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest  
420 Barrett Street  
Dillon, MT 59725

**COPY**

Dear Supervisor Ramsey,

We would like to provide additional comment on the Forest Plan Revision process, and suggest a means for improvement. There are currently two fundamentally different approaches under consideration. First, the Forest Service put forth a Draft Forest Plan Revision for public comment. However, resource interest groups, including county governments were not included in development of plan elements. Second, the Partnership Strategy has been developed through direct input from a broad base of resource groups. This proposal is a historical step demonstrating that conservation interests and the timber industry can indeed reach consensus on managing public lands. Direct input provides a greater opportunity for "buy-in" to the planning process by those directly impacted by management decisions.

The Partnership Strategy provides improved balance and flexibility for accomplishing the increased and ever-changing recreational, economic and social expectations that Montana residents and local government will continue to seek from the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. The proposal has the ability to provide jobs in mills and in forest restoration activities, and it provides flexibility for the Forest Service to better respond to changing values and needs the public expects from our public forests. It can also enable the Forest Service to better manage fish and wildlife habitat in a preventive fashion that could reduce the future need to list species on the Federal Endangered Species list.

The methodology employed by the Partnership group fits well with the principles of the Granite County Natural Resources Land Use Council. The Council consists of a broad

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base of resource interests and provides direct input to the Commissioners on issues relating to resource management on federal lands. The benefit of broad based input from resource interests is the ability to use input from those with the greatest knowledge of the resource base in developing appropriate management strategies.

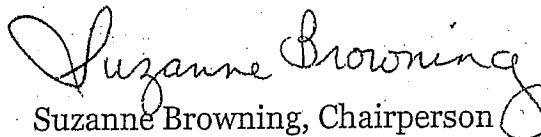
The Bureau of Land Management actively uses the expertise from Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) to assist in developing District Resource Management Plans, which are analogous to Forest Plans. The Western Montana RAC recently completed working with the BLM in developing the Resource Management Plan for the Dillon District Resource Area. This process, while not totally without controversy, greatly improved the effectiveness of plan development. Resource interest groups had an avenue for direct input to the planning process. Direct input drastically reduced the workload associated with responding to critical comments from resource groups.

As stated in our letter dated June 13, 2006, we strongly encourage the Forest Service to revisit the philosophy and methodology employed to develop the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Plan. We encourage you to re-open the planning process and provide for direct input from resource interest groups in development of plan elements rather than merely comment on agency generated alternatives.

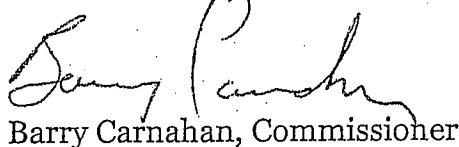
We look forward to working with you in the development of an effective and dynamic Forest Plan. Please feel free to contact us as the Forest Plan revision proceeds.

Sincerely,

Granite County Board of Commissioners

  
Suzanne Browning, Chairperson

Clifford Nelson, Commissioner

  
Barry Carnahan, Commissioner

cc: List on next page

cc: Senator Conrad Burns  
Senator Max Baucus  
Representative Dennis Rehberg  
Governor Bryan Schweitzer  
Regional Forester Gail Kimbell  
District Ranger Charlene Bucha Gentry  
State Senator Jesse Laslovich  
State Representative Dan Villa  
Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commissioners  
Broadwater County Commissioners  
Beaverhead County Commissioners  
Butte-Silver Bow County Commissioners  
Jefferson County Commissioners  
Madison County Commissioners  
Powell County Commissioners  
Granite Conservation District  
Sun Mountain Lumber Company, Sherm Anderson, PO Box 389, Deer Lodge, MT 59722