

# MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION



June 26, 2006

Gail Kimbell  
Regional Forester  
USFS Northern Region  
Federal Building  
200 E. Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59807

*Seven decades  
of preserving  
our hunting,  
fishing, and  
wildlife  
heritage.*

## **RE: Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Partnership Strategy**

Dear Regional Forester:

Montana Wildlife Federation is an organization of nearly 7000 hunters, anglers and conservationists dedicated to protection of fish and wildlife habitat and the sound utilization of Montana fish and wildlife resources. MWF is the oldest and largest organization of conservation minded hunters and anglers and as such, we have a significant stake in the management of our national forests. We have long been engaged in conservation issues on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and our membership has long recognized that southwest Montana has some of the finest fish and wildlife habitat in North America. Last fall, we submitted extensive comments on how the draft Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan could be improved.

**The Board of Directors of Montana Wildlife Federation are submitting support for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership Strategy concept and requesting the Forest Service to analyze the Partnership Strategy developed by a coalition of conservation organizations and timber companies.**

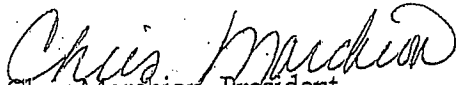
While many of our recommendations previously submitted on the BD Forest Plan are, in concept, included in the Partnership Strategy and we think the broad outlines of the Strategy promise much by way of wildlife enhancement and wildland protection, other proposals in the Partnership Strategy are new and deserve consideration. We believe these proposals, as well as the comprehensive strategy the Partnership has advanced, need to be fully evaluated by the Forest Service. The emphasis on fish and wildlife restoration and the use of stewardship contracting are two new elements that demand additional analysis.

We are highly intrigued by how stewardship contracting might advance the restoration needs of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge. According to Forest Service data, the Beaverhead portion of the Forest has a backlog of 106 watershed restoration projects that will cost an estimated \$3.6 million. The Forest Service also estimates that in order to meet the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks elk security goals, an estimated 1500 miles of unneeded roads and user created motorized trails will need to be reclaimed and restored, again at a cost of millions of dollars. We look forward to an analysis that will tell us how stewardship contracting might

be used to fund critical restoration work even while providing jobs and sustaining local economies.

Montana Wildlife Federation has long believed that the key to sustaining and building Montana's remarkable fish and wildlife heritage is through strong partnerships between the private organizations and companies and government agencies. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership has taken an important step forward in building to such a framework. We ask the Forest Service to take the next step by analyzing it as a forest plan alternative and sending it out to the public. Such a process will establish a strong foundation for moving forward in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

With Best Regards,

  
Chris Marchion, President

Cc: Dale Bosworth  
Senator Max Baucus  
Senator Conrad Burns  
Congressman Dennis Rehberg  
Sherrn Anderson, Sun Mountain Lumber  
Tim Baker, Montana Wilderness Association  
Bruce Farling, Montana Trout Unlimited  
Tom France, National Wildlife Federation