

David Cobb
Project Team Leader
Priest Lake Ranger District
32203 Highway 57
Priest River, ID 83856

Date: June 9, 2017

Subject: Hanna Flats GNA Project

Dear Mr. Cobb:

The vision of the Panhandle Forest Collaborative (“PFC”) is to assist agencies to bring balanced approaches to timber, wild ecosystems and recreation and to contribute to the sustainable social, environmental and economic viability of our region. The PFC focuses on issues on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (“IPNF”), primarily within the Sandpoint, Priest Lake, and portions of the Coeur d’Alene Ranger Districts. Our goals include reducing litigation, promoting sustainable operations, enhancing travel and recreation opportunities, maintaining infrastructure for timber, ranching and recreation, and conserving native ecosystems. The PFC works to build communication and connectivity between on-going local community efforts and county, state, and federal agencies, to provide consensus recommendations for project and forest plans that address our goals.

The PFC is writing to provide input about the Hanna Flats GNA Project. We would like to thank the Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Lands for sharing information about the status of this project with the collaborative.

This is the first project in Idaho to be developed under this authority from the ground up. We would like to establish a good foundation for future GNA projects. The PFC is well positioned to assist the Forest Service and the State of Idaho during the planning process and ensure its success.

As you are aware, the 2014 Farm Bill includes new tools to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration work on national forest lands. Chief among these tools is the new CE category that allows up to 3,000 acres of vegetative treatments without the preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

Unfortunately this tool does not include watershed restoration activities. It is our understanding that there may be watershed restoration and wildlife habitat improvement opportunities in the project area, including the reduction of sediment in Lamb Creek. If so, we would encourage the Forest Service to expand the scope of project objectives to include these opportunities. The Forest Service may be able to use more than one CE to accomplish integrated restoration objectives.

This project also represents an opportunity to enhance recreational opportunities in the project area, including the cross-country ski trails. We encourage the Forest Service and IDL to work with the local nordic club to explore these possibilities and mitigate any impacts of the project to these recreational resources.

The Hanna Flats Project area is also home to some unique botanical resources. It is important that the Forest Service botanist be involved in the planning process for this project. Design criteria, such as no harvest zones, may need to be incorporated on a site-specific basis to protect some of these special resources. Similarly, we hope other Forest Service specialists will be involved in field reconnaissance and planning.

In addition to obtaining further information about the botanical resources in the project area, the PFC has also identified other categories of information that we would like to review in order to further refine our recommendations about the project. Some of the information gaps we have identified include:

- Access management provisions within the “BORZ” area
- Existing old growth stands and potential old growth recruitment stands
- Opportunities for integrated restoration
- Off-site plantations
- Possible management actions in response to the above

Again, we would like to thank the Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Lands for briefing the collaborative about this project. We look forward to continuing to work with the Forest Service and the state throughout the planning process.

Sincerely,

Mike Petersen
Co-Chair

Liz Johnson-Gebhardt
Co-Chair



CC: Ed Wingert