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City of Helena

Heather Degeest, Acting Helena District Ranger
Helena National Forest Headquarters
2880 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59602

July 18, 2013

Re: RED MOUNTAIN FLUME CHESSMAN RESERVOIR PROJECT

Dear Ms. Degeest:

The City of Helena strongly supports the Forest Service's Red Mountain Flume Chessman Reservoir project. This project helps to address the critical need in the Helena National Forest to treat the area, which has a 90% mortality rate in beetle killed trees, and which poses a serious threat to the primary water supply for the City in the event of a catastrophic wildfire. The proposed Forest Service project complements the work already completed on City and private property and will maximize the effectiveness of that work.

The risk of cataclysmic wildfire in the area prompted action by the City to work to diminish the threat by beginning to reduce fuels in the area. The Helena City Commission formally accepted the Tenmile Creek Water Supply Fuel Reduction Project on July 7th, 2009, and was awarded FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Funding for the project was \$312,831. Collectively, the awarded FEMA funds, combined with \$104,277 in required City of Helena match funding, account for a project budget totaling \$417,108.00.

Thanks to coordinated efforts to clean up private land in the watershed area, City of Helena contractors, along with contributing efforts from City Parks Department staff, completed 72 acres of forest clearing work within private ownerships located adjacent to the Red Mountain Flume in the summer/fall work seasons of 2011 and 2012. In the absence of any unforeseen delays, approximately 95% of the FEMA funded forest fuel mitigation included within the Tenmile Creek Water Supply Fuel Reduction Project is slated for completion on or before December 31, 2013.

The proposed Forest Service project fits into the overall recommendations submitted by the Ten Mile Watershed Collaborative Committee, which address the health of the entire watershed. We look forward to additional coordination of projects in the area to address the watershed's long-term sustainability.

On behalf of the City of Helena, I strongly support the efforts of the Helena Forest Service in the Red Mountain Flume Chessman Reservoir Project. The removal of wildfire fuels in the area will maximize the effectiveness of the work already completed by the City and private land owners and will limit the consequences of a potentially catastrophic wildfire in the area.

Sincerely,

Ron Alles
City Manager, City of Helena
ralles@helenamt.gov