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**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** December 8, 2006

Dear Interested party,

Enclosed is your copy of the Decision Notice for the South Grouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. This decision authorizes activities designed to reduce threats from catastrophic wildfire and to improve forest health on National Forest System lands on Grouse Mountain in Sagle, Idaho.

This project was planned under the authority of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003, a law enacted to reduce the threat of destructive wildfires while upholding environmental standards and encouraging early public input during review and planning processes. The environmental analysis (EA) was sent to the public on September 1, 2006. Projects developed under the HFRA authority include a pre-decisional administrative review process referred to as an "objection process" designed to encourage early public participation in project planning. One objection was received following distribution of the EA. This objection was reviewed by the regional office, and clarification and discussion of several points has been included in the decision. To summarize our responses to the objection points:

- I understand that slash from harvesting will increase short-term fire hazard. Our team mitigated this risk through the prudent use of piling and the construction of defensible fuel breaks. We are confident that the long-term fuel reduction and forest health benefits resulting from this project will outweigh the increased fire risk in the short term.
- A hard look was taken at the existing condition of the soil resource and at the effects of the proposed activities. Modeling based on the monitoring of similar activities was used to estimate the effects of proposed activities (including underburning and the burning of piles) on the soil resource. All road construction will be temporary, and our district has a good track record of decommissioning these roads. With regard to the efficacy of the restoration planned for these activity areas, monitoring of recent skid trail and road decommissioning on the IPNF shows that temporary road obliteration has been successful, and that subsoiling, ripping, and the introduction of coarse woody debris can be used to aid the recovery process in severely disturbed areas.
- The South Grouse project meets the intent of the HFRA. It is located in a community identified as "at-risk from wildfire" in the Federal Register on August 17, 2001. It was developed through a collaborative process with the Bonner County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Committee (BONFIRE) and interested members of the public. The proposed action is largely a product of the collaborative process and on public input received in comment letters, meetings, and on the ground reviews.
- Regarding the potential for cumulative effects stemming from BONFIRE's fuel reduction efforts on private lands, the bottom line is that private efforts will only add to our efforts to reduce the threat of destructive wildfires to the community. Information about what you



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can do to protect your home and property from the risk of wildfire is available on the Web at: [www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov), [www.keepidahogreen.org](http://www.keepidahogreen.org) and [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

We believe that this is a well-designed project that will meet the needs of people living in our community as well as those living outside the area.

While the South Grouse Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project is not subject to administrative appeals, please don't hesitate to contact A.J. Helgenberg at (208) 265-6643 if you have further comments, or would like clarification on this project.

Thanks again for your time and interest in this project.

Sincerely,



RICHARD P. KRAMER  
District Ranger

