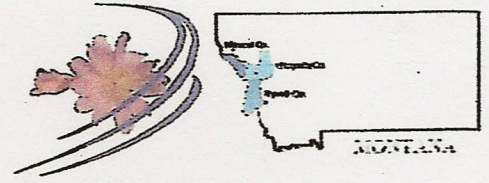


Seeley Lake Rural Fire District
P.O. Box 309
Seeley Lake, MT 59068



Seeley Lake
Clearwater Resource Council
Fire Task Force



Bitter Root RC&D Area,
1709 N First St.
Hamilton, MT 59840

November 18, 2008

Representative Denny Rehberg
516 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Rehberg,

The Seeley-Swan Fuels Mitigation Task Force wishes to express its support for the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project proposed by a coalition of Montana conservation, timber, small business, and outdoor groups. We encourage you to pass legislation enacting this well-balanced pilot plan to actively manage forests in the Seeley Lake Ranger District.

The Fuels Mitigation Task Force is a cooperative group including representatives from the Clearwater Resource Council, Seeley Lake and Swan Valley Rural Fire Departments, US Forest Service, Montana DNRC, Swan Ecosystem Center, and Bitterroot Resource Conservation & Development District. Working together, we have drafted and implemented the Seeley-Swan Fire Plan, a community wildfire protection plan. One major goal of the Fuels Mitigation Task Force is to define the areas at risk for catastrophic wildfire and attempt to reduce that threat to the people, community, homes, and businesses that are here. Another goal is to provide convenient, professional, and financial assistance to private landowners to help thin their forested lands for wildfire protection.

The Fuels Mitigation Task Force has reviewed and discussed the various components of the proposal. The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project would expand stewardship funding to actively manage the forest, restore watersheds and ecosystems, and improve fish and wildlife habitat. It will also assist in developing a co-generation plant to utilize woody fuels from the thinned forests. A final and key component is the designation of additional wilderness lands.

We believe this project will significantly improve the safety of our local communities and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire within portions of the Blackfoot and Clearwater River watersheds. We also believe that by making use of the wood from the thinned forests, we can create and sustain jobs that support the forest workers in these Montana valleys and that a co-generation plant will help improve our energy needs for this area while helping to protect the environment in which we live.

Thank you for your consideration of this important pilot project and the potential legislation that would implement it. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (406) 207-1232.

Sincerely,

Roger Marshall
Chairman, Seeley-Swan Fuels Mitigation Task Force