

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
HELENA-LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
OBJECTOR RESOLUTION MEETINGS

Held Remotely via Zoom
Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday
September 29, September 30, and October 1, 2020

Wildlife - Diversity, Connectivity, and ESA Species
Identification of Species of Conservation Concern

Elk Habitat Management

General Access - Motorized and Mechanized Suitability

Recommended Wilderness Areas and Boundary Adjustments

Designated Area Management - Badger-Two Medicine,
Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit,
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

Conservation Watershed Network and Downstream Water Users

Timber, Sustained Yield, and Reforestation

Range

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1 WILDLIFE - DIVERSITY, CONNECTIVITY, AND ESA SPECIES

2 Tuesday, September 29, 2020, 9:35 a.m. - 11:34 a.m.

3

4

A P P E A R A N C E S

5

FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

6

FOREST SERVICE:

7

LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer

SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor

8

DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader

LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist

9

SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds

WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist

10

AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist

KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds

11

ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses

LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor

12

JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff

CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist

13

TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner

CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

14

15

OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

16

AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.

BONNIE RICE, Sierra Club

17

ERIC CLEWIS, Montana Wildlife Federation

JOCELYN LEROUX, Western Watersheds Project

18

ZACH ANGSTEAD, Montana Wilderness Association

SARAH LUNDSTRUM, National Park Conservation Assn.

19

PETE NELSON, Defenders of Wildlife

GAYLE JOSLIN, Helena Hunters and Anglers

20

MATTHEW BISHOP, Helena Hunters and Anglers

PETER METCALF, Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance

21

22

23

24

** NOTE: (Inaudible) denotes inability to distinguish words due to technology

25

1 WHEREUPON, the proceedings were had as follows:

2 MR. JOHNSON: All right. I think we'll go ahead
3 and get started. It looks like we've got a good group of
4 people here. I'm going to go ahead and repost the
5 information that was on that welcoming screen here in the
6 chat box. Everyone, if you would click on the Chat in the
7 lower part of your screen center, it should bring up just
8 some basic information about the Zoom box and how to name
9 yourself if you're online. So that's in the chat box.

10 I'll just start by welcoming everyone and thanking you
11 for being here today. It's great to see so much interest
12 and concern about the future of the Helena-Lewis and Clark
13 National Forest and really welcome your participation
14 today.

15 My name is Shawn Johnson, and I'm with the University
16 of Montana. I am going to be the meeting facilitator
17 today, and I was fortunate enough to be the facilitator
18 for a lot of the public engagement meetings for the
19 Helena-Lewis and Clark as they went through forest plan
20 revision.

21 I want to start by sharing some features of Zoom. I
22 know that this is a familiar platform for many, but it's a
23 new platform for some of you, so just start with some of
24 the technical features. First, in terms of your view
25 today, you'll see a tab in the upper right-hand corner of

1 your screen where you can toggle between Speaker View and
2 Gallery View. So depending on if you want to focus on
3 just the person speaking or everyone online, you can
4 toggle there.

5 All the other features are across the bottom of your
6 screen. From left to right, you've got an Audio Mute
7 button, and we would just ask that if you're not speaking,
8 to keep your audio on mute so that we can hear everyone
9 else. You can also switch between Phone and Computer
10 Audio. So if for some reason your computer audio becomes
11 a little bit sketchy because of connectivity issues you
12 can switch to a phone line. That's where you do that, by
13 hitting the up arrow next to the Microphone icon.

14 The next button over is your Video button. We would
15 ask that during introductions and for all of the objectors
16 and interested parties that are hoping to speak during the
17 different sections of today's conversation, that you would
18 actually have your video on during those parts of our
19 conversation so that we can see and hear one another, and
20 it's a nice thing to be able to connect that way, even
21 remotely.

22 The Participants tab is an important one at the bottom
23 of your screen. When you click the Participants tab, it
24 will bring up the list of everyone's name who is joining
25 us today. And importantly, it gives you the opportunity

1 to raise your hand across the bottom. So under the list
2 of everyone's name, you should see a Raise Hand button.
3 If you click that Raise Hand button, your name will rise
4 to the top of my list and I can call on you for your
5 question or comment. The Chat button next to that will be
6 a place for us to share information, such as the contact
7 information that's currently shared in the chat box.

8 I'd just ask, because we are on Zoom, to speak
9 clearly, to speak loudly and slowly so that everyone can
10 hear and understand. We are also attempting to have
11 closed captioning added to the meeting so that people can
12 read along as well.

13 I want to emphasize a couple of pieces in the chat
14 box; that both Timory and Cody are available for technical
15 assistance issues, and, again, for members of the press,
16 there's contact information there for the regional public
17 affairs specialist.

18 Because we're on Zoom, we are being welcomed into
19 people's lives in different ways than perhaps before, so
20 we are probably going to get a peek into people's homes at
21 times and some of the distractions and that they face, and
22 just ask that everyone be accepting of some of those
23 distractions and be as patient as possible. We're all
24 trying to do our best here and are actually really
25 fortunate to have the Zoom capability to connect together

1 today.

2 I want to also say that we are lucky to have a
3 transcriptionist capturing today's conversation, and so I
4 want to just briefly introduce Cheryl, who is with us
5 today, and say that she is going to be providing a
6 verbatim transcript of our conversation for the record,
7 which will be nice to have as we continue to work through
8 the planning process. And that transcript will be made
9 available to the public and posted as soon as it's
10 available.

11 So with that, I would like to begin some introductions
12 of some of the important people that will be joining us
13 today, and then following the introductions, we'll walk
14 through our objectives for today, as well as an overview
15 of the agenda.

16 I'd like to start by introducing Sara Mayben, who is
17 the deputy forest supervisor for the Helena-Lewis and
18 Clark National Forest, and she'll have a chance to
19 introduce herself and the team that's put together the
20 forest plan revision.

21 Sara.

22 MS. MAYBEN: Thanks, Shawn.

23 Good morning, everybody. As Shawn said, my name is
24 Sara Mayben. I am the deputy forest supervisor for the
25 Helena-Lewis and Clark. Bill Avey is on a special fire

1 assignment and unavailable to sit in on today's resolution
2 meeting, so I am sitting in on his behalf. I want to
3 welcome you all. I know this is an important process for
4 the forest in our foreseeable future as far as management
5 goes. It's an important topic. And I really appreciate
6 you all taking the time to provide us your insights.

7 I'd like to introduce the team members that are on,
8 and I'm going to ask them to turn on their cameras. So
9 first we have Deb Entwistle, who is the team leader.
10 She's been leading this effort since its -- well, not
11 since its inception, but she's been on the team since its
12 inception. Lori Wollan, who is our GIS specialist on the
13 team. Scott Nagel, who serves as our watershed person.
14 He's new to our team, relatively speaking. He's taking
15 the place of Wayne Green, who retired. Wendy Clark, who
16 is our wildlife biologist. Amanda Milburn, who is our
17 timber person/civic culturist. I believe Kyle Schmitt is
18 on, who is doing range and weeds. Elizabeth Casselli, who
19 is doing recreation and other uses. And then Liz Smith,
20 who is our writer/editor for the team. And I also want to
21 acknowledge that Jenny Woods is on, and you may know her
22 from all our planning staff in the Helena-Lewis and Clark
23 office.

24 Deb, did I miss anybody?

25 MS. SMITH: Did you want us to turn our videos

1 on? Because I did.

2 MS. MAYBEN: Yes. I want you guys just to wave
3 and say hi.

4 MS. ENTWISTLE: I think you got everybody who is
5 here. Thanks.

6 MS. MAYBEN: All right. Awesome. Thank you.
7 That's what I've got, Shawn.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Sara, for the
9 introduction to yourself and the team and for giving us an
10 update on where Bill is. I know that he was central to
11 this whole planning process as well.

12 I'd like to now introduce Leanne Marten, the regional
13 forester for Region 1.

14 Leanne.

15 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Shawn.

16 And good morning to everyone. Great to have so many
17 join us here this morning. So I really appreciate you
18 taking time out of your busy days. And as Shawn said, I'm
19 Leanne Marten. For those of you I haven't had the
20 pleasure of meeting yet, I'm the regional forester here in
21 the Northern Region. And my role today and over the next
22 couple days, I'm the objection reviewing officer on the
23 draft decision for Forest Supervisor Bill Avey. And so I
24 just look forward to really having a great day.

25 what I'd thought I'd do to start out with here, and

1 just to get us kicked off, is talk a little bit about the
2 process, how my role fits into this compared to Bill's and
3 Sara's, how we got to where we're at to date, even what's
4 on the agenda. And then I'll let Shawn kind of give an
5 overview of the agenda, and then we will jump right into
6 the first topic of the day from that standpoint.

7 As we move forward, I really appreciate just folks's
8 patience. I have done these before, but I have not done
9 this large of an objection meeting for three days solid
10 virtually, so we're doing the best we can. I think we
11 have it structured to keep it as interactive, open
12 dialogue, but I do ask that if you could just give us a
13 little bit of patience.

14 And obviously, as Shawn pointed out, we have some
15 folks in the background doing a lot of work on this. If
16 you have issues or technical difficulties, please give
17 them a ring so we can get on those right away. I really
18 want this to be about you and about the opportunity for
19 you to be talking with each other, for me to listen and
20 learn and see where we can go moving forward.

21 A little bit about where and how we got here. I know
22 you've been very involved with Helena-Lewis and Clark over
23 the last several years getting to this point, and I cannot
24 thank you enough for just your continued interest in the
25 management of your public lands. For those of you that

1 have listened to me before, you've heard me say that it
2 truly is an honor and very humbling to be able to manage
3 public lands on your behalf. They're not my public lands,
4 they're not Bill's, they're not Sara's. They're your
5 public lands. And so we're truly honored to be able to
6 try and help manage them on your behalf.

7 And no surprise, not everybody agrees on how the lands
8 should be managed. We'll learn today that many of you
9 don't agree with each other, and that's okay. Our job is
10 to try and help out that dialogue, to listen and learn. I
11 want to try and see things through your lens versus what I
12 think I understood through the objections, but I really
13 need your help with that. So I'm going to be teasing out
14 some questions and try and just understand better what I
15 think I was reading and understanding from your written
16 objections, but I'm not quite sure on a couple of these.

17 And that leads me to how we even got to where we're at
18 today. We had, give or take -- I'm not going to give you
19 exact numbers, because I know that it's being refined and
20 the team has all these exact numbers, but we had over
21 150 objectors to the Helena-Lewis and Clark plan, had over
22 120-some actual distinctly unique objection issues that
23 were brought forward. So as you can imagine, with that
24 many people being involved and, frankly, that many issues,
25 we simply do not have the means to be able to talk about

1 every single one of them over the next couple days.

2 what I want to make sure everybody is aware of and to
3 assure you is every one of the objection issues brought
4 forward in your written objections will be responded to.
5 They'll be responded to in my letter back to Forest
6 Supervisor Avey. They may not be in there word for word
7 how you wrote them, they may be summarized, because many
8 of them have the same theme to them, but they will be
9 responded to.

10 How we chose what was on the agenda was I really had
11 some questions, need some help understanding. I want to
12 have more robust dialogue on some of these issues to help
13 move forward on my letter and potential instructions back
14 to Forest Supervisor Avey on how to address some of the
15 objection points. So even if it's not on the agenda, that
16 does not mean that your objection issues were not taken
17 seriously or that they're not important. It just means we
18 had to really focus in on a group of them just because of
19 time, and, again, trying to figure out ones that I could
20 really use your assistance on understanding and making
21 sure I'm seeing things as you intended in your written
22 objection.

23 You'll see that -- And this morning's a great example.
24 It's wildlife. There's a lot of twists and turns to
25 wildlife. There's, I can't remember if it's later today

1 or tomorrow, wilderness, recommended wilderness. A lot of
2 different perspectives on that. Frankly, there's a lot of
3 different values that all of you hold on many of these and
4 how you just see and value your public lands and how
5 they're being managed.

6 what you will not hear from me, and what I will not
7 ever do is ask you to change your values. That is
8 something that is not anything I would ask anybody to do.
9 what I may ask you to do through questions, though, is
10 help articulate or help me understand where you're coming
11 from and, you know, what your value really is encasing
12 there from that standpoint. Just because we don't agree
13 with each other doesn't mean that we don't respect each
14 other's values.

15 And so I just want to put that up front, because I
16 know sometimes it may come across inadvertently that we're
17 trying to ask you to change your values. That isn't what
18 we're trying to do, and I would never try and do that from
19 that perspective. I feel it's important, because many of
20 these have a foundation of very important values to many
21 of you that are participating and many of you that are
22 listening in from members of the public as well.

23 The other thing that you're going to see, and it's
24 going to be after lunch for those of you that are joining
25 us, there is one portion of this where I am not the

1 reviewing officer, and that's Acting Associate Deputy
2 Chief Christine Dawe. Because for species of conservation
3 concern, that was actually -- the list is actually my
4 decision. It would make sense I don't review my own
5 decision. So you will see one part of the agenda today
6 where there will be a different reviewing officer, but
7 it's only for that one very narrow specific decision
8 that's actually mine and was not Forest Supervisor Avey's
9 on that. Otherwise, I am the reviewing officer for the
10 entire objection process, with that part of it.

11 And then I'll wrap this up on -- After every topic on
12 the agenda, we have time allotted. It may or may not take
13 that much time, but we do have to stick to the times on
14 the agenda. And the reason is, just like many of you,
15 people will be coming and going. We set this up so people
16 did not have to just sit three days -- you're more than
17 welcome to, but we set it up so you could come and go as
18 your schedules allow, and if you're an objector or an
19 interested party, at specific times, trying to minimize
20 the impact to your daily lives.

21 So I'm going to apologize up front; some of what I
22 just said some of you may hear multiple times over the
23 next couple days, because there will be new people and we
24 just need to repeat from that standpoint. I know it may
25 get old for a couple of you, so I just apologize up front.

1 I'm not trying to just have you hear me speak over and
2 over on the same things, but just recognizing that we'll
3 have new people coming and going throughout the next
4 three days as we move forward.

5 I think with that, I will turn it back over to Shawn
6 to just run through the gist of the agenda and some of
7 that. Obviously, if there's questions for me or points of
8 clarification, Shawn is going to be helping facilitate as
9 we go through, as will Sara and I. So I'm happy to answer
10 any clarifying questions at this point if folks have any.

11 But Shawn, I'll turn it back over to you and we'll go
12 from there.

13 But again, thanks, everyone. I really look forward to
14 the next few days.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Leanne.

16 Are there any clarifying questions for Leanne just
17 now? If you have one, please go ahead and raise your
18 hand, either in person, like I'm doing right now, and
19 you'd have to turn on your video to do that, or by using
20 the Raise Hand button on the Participant's field. Any
21 questions? Awesome.

22 well, thanks for that overview, Leanne. And as those
23 questions come forward, we'll be sure to grab them.

24 I do just want to take a minute to run through our
25 objectives for this whole process and for today's agenda.

1 Leanne touched on some of this, but just so we have it in
2 front of us, I did prepare a couple of slides, so I'm
3 going to throw those up on the screen here in just a
4 second, and hopefully all the technology is working here.

5 Now, the reason to do this, and, as Leanne said, we'll
6 probably revisit this content a few times over the course
7 of the next three days, but just to give a sense of the
8 flow of the conversation and what we're trying to achieve
9 as well as to clarify some basic ground rules.

10 So just in terms of some of those basic ground rules,
11 really, the core of this, as Leanne said, is really to get
12 a sense of your key interests and concerns and to do some
13 problem solving, explore some potential solutions, and see
14 if we can come to some shared understanding of what might
15 be possible. And to do that, it's really going to take
16 all of us listening really closely to one another. So
17 some basic ground rules:

18 Let's just listen carefully to one another,
19 demonstrate respect, speak one at a time, really focus on
20 understanding. And so I think you'll hear Leanne ask a
21 lot of questions. I would invite all of you to ask
22 questions too and really focus on understanding one
23 another.

24 Because we're in this Zoom format, just remember to
25 speak clearly and take your time and be patient with one

1 another and forgiving, because people are in this format,
2 it's unfamiliar, and so we may have some distractions or
3 some technical issues that may get in the way.

4 But we're really trying to facilitate, as best we can,
5 a dialogue. And that was the key piece here, that we come
6 away with some better understanding of what your issues
7 are and what might be possible as we move forward.

8 Just in terms of basic protocol, as we enter into each
9 of these conversation spaces, it would be helpful, as we
10 enter into that, to have everyone have their video on so
11 that we can see one another. And then when you're asked
12 to speak, go ahead and introduce yourself for the first
13 time. Even though we can see your name in the Zoom box,
14 it's nice for you to just have that opportunity to
15 introduce yourself, who you are, where you're from; and if
16 you have an organizational affiliation, that would be
17 helpful too. Because we have a transcriptionist, it would
18 also be helpful for you to spell any unusual names or
19 complicated names, just so we can get that information
20 correctly captured on the record.

21 As we then start thinking about our overall objectives
22 for our time together, this is just another way of
23 restating some of the key pieces that Leanne shared with
24 us at the top of the meeting. But really, this is a
25 chance to discuss these topics with her and to have an

1 engaged conversation. It gives you the chance to validate
2 or clarify what you've shared with the Forest and with the
3 reviewing officer and for her to ask questions to build
4 that shared understanding.

5 It's the opportunity for everyone who has an interest
6 in that topic area to discuss possible solutions to
7 collective concerns, and it's an opportunity to build
8 shared understanding of what the next steps are in the
9 review process, so we all walk away with a shared
10 understanding of what happens after today.

11 And then just a quick overview of today's agenda. So
12 we've just come to the end here of our welcome and
13 introductions, and we'll be starting shortly here with our
14 first topical area of the day on wildlife, including
15 diversity, connectivity, and ESA species issues. We'll
16 then take a break, come back at 1 o'clock for
17 identification of species of conservation concern. And
18 again, this is the piece where Christine Dawe will be
19 joining us. At 2 o'clock, we'll shift to elk habitat.
20 And then at 3 o'clock, we'll have a summary of the day.

21 Over the next couple of days, we'll move to additional
22 topics. So tomorrow, the key topics are access, including
23 motorized and mechanized suitability. Tomorrow, we'll
24 also have recommended wilderness areas and boundary
25 adjustments; designated area management, including the

1 Badger-Two Medicine, Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, and
2 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. And on Thursday
3 we'll shift to the conservation watershed network issues
4 and downstream water uses, we'll talk about timber,
5 sustained yield, and reforestation, and range issues.

6 So we'll have a quick summary of each agenda at the
7 start of each day.

8 MS. MARTEN: Hey, Shawn?

9 MR. JOHNSON: Leanne.

10 MS. MARTEN: I might have missed it at the
11 beginning, but did you want to mention if there's any
12 members of the media on the call and questions that they
13 may have?

14 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Leanne.

15 So if members of the media have joined us today, we'd
16 invite you to be in touch with Chiara Cipriano, and I hope
17 I'm saying your name right, Chiara. I know you've joined
18 us here on the Zoom meeting screen as well.

19 And I think that information was posted earlier in the
20 chat box, but I know it only appears as you enter, so I'm
21 going to go ahead and put that again in the chat box. You
22 can access that by hitting the Chat button at the bottom
23 of your screen. And that is there as well.

24 I would also just highlight or clarify that as we get
25 into different topic areas, that is a space for the people

1 who have standing as an objector or as an interested
2 party. Members of the public are welcome to listen in,
3 but it's really for those people who have the objector or
4 interested party status. And so we'll invite those people
5 to have their videocameras on. Members of the public are
6 welcome to listen in.

7 Any other questions or clarifications as we get
8 started?

9 Sara? Leanne?

10 All right. Well, we've got just one minute here
11 before the top of the hour, so this is just a chance for
12 everyone to take a quick stretch break, and then we'll
13 come back and start the conversation on wildlife here in
14 just a minute.

15 MS. MARTEN: Timory, did you have something?

16 MS. PEEL: Yeah. I just wanted to let folks
17 know, I did put it in the chat, but in case folks haven't
18 seen that, there is a link in the chat box for closed
19 captioning, if that would help with the audio for you.
20 It's not internal to this Zoom meeting. It is an external
21 link, so you'll need to have a second web browser open.
22 If you are using Zoom in one tab of your web browser,
23 you'll need to have a separate window in order to read
24 that caption and see the participants and the discussion
25 here as well.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Timory, for making
2 that available. Really appreciate it.

3 If anyone has any challenge accessing that, just let
4 us know, raise your hand.

5 All right. So here we are at 10 o'clock, and so we'll
6 go ahead and get started with this next part of our
7 agenda. This is our first thematic topic for the day, and
8 it's on issues related to wildlife, including diversity,
9 connectivity, and ESA species. I don't see anyone new
10 joining the meeting just now, but just in case you missed
11 it, my name is Shawn Johnson, and I'm at the University of
12 Montana facilitating today's meeting, and joined by
13 Sara Mayben and Leanne Marten, who are deputy forest
14 supervisor for the Helena-Lewis and Clark and regional
15 forester respectively, and they'll be the Forest Service
16 representatives guiding us through today's conversation.

17 If you are one of the parties that is interested in
18 talking on this issue or topic, you are an objector or
19 interested person on any of these issues, I'd invite you
20 at this point to go ahead and turn on your video so that
21 we can identify you. And then we'd like to actually start
22 with a round of introductions. So I'll just take a minute
23 for people who are interested in this topic area to turn
24 on their video screen.

25 Great. Seeing a lot of screens come up. I'm going to

1 go ahead and just invite you individually to introduce
2 yourself, and I'm going to just use the way you're
3 appearing on my screen here to do that.

4 so Al Christophersen, you're first in line here, if
5 you want to say hi.

6 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Good morning, everybody.
7 Thank you for having this. My name is Al Christophersen,
8 and I am the cochair of what used to be the Elkhorn
9 Restoration Committee, and we're now the Big Elk Divide
10 Restoration Committee.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Al. Good to see
12 you this morning.

13 Bonnie Rice.

14 MS. RICE: Good morning, everyone, and thanks for
15 the opportunity to discuss these issues today. My name is
16 Bonnie Rice, and I'm the senior campaign representative
17 for Sierra Club's our wild America campaign in the
18 Greater Yellowstone and Northern Rockies Regions, and I'm
19 based in Bozeman.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Bonnie.

21 Eric Clewis.

22 MR. CLEWIS: Hey, everyone. My name is
23 Eric Clewis. I am the western Montana field coordinator
24 for the Montana wildlife Federation.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Eric.

1 Jocelyn Leroux.

2 MS. LEROUX: Good morning. Thanks for having us
3 here today. I am Jocelyn Leroux. I'm the Montana and
4 Washington director with Western Watersheds Project, and
5 I'm based in Missoula.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Jocelyn.

7 Zach Angstead.

8 MR. ANGSTEAD: Hi, everyone. Thanks for having
9 me. Good morning. My name is Zach Angstead. I'm the
10 central Montana field director for the Montana Wilderness
11 Association, and I'm based out of Great Falls.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks for joining us,
13 Zach.

14 Sarah Lundstrum.

15 MS. LUNDSTRUM: Hi. Thanks. Sarah Lundstrum. I
16 am the Glacier program manager for the National Parks
17 Conservation Association, based in Whitefish, Montana.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Sarah.

19 Pete Nelson.

20 MR. NELSON: Hello. My name is Pete Nelson. I'm
21 director of the federal lands program for Defenders of
22 Wildlife. I'm in Bozeman, Montana.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks for joining us, Pete.

24 Gayle, I've forgotten your last name, but I see you're
25 here with us.

1 MS. JOSLIN: Well, it's Gayle Joslin. I'm sorry.
2 I failed to put that in. But I am an interested person
3 and a member of one of the objecting parties for Helena
4 Hunters and Anglers, and I'm here to listen today. So
5 thank you.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks for joining us,
7 Gayle.

8 Matt Bishop.

9 MR. BISHOP: Good morning, everybody. Thanks for
10 having me. Matthew Bishop. I'm an attorney with the
11 Western Environmental Law Center here in Helena, Montana,
12 and I filed an objection on behalf of the Helena Hunters
13 and Anglers. And like I said, I'm here in Helena. Thank
14 you.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks.

16 And Peter Metcalf.

17 MR. METCALF: Hi. Good morning, everyone. My
18 name is Peter Metcalf. Thanks for being here for this
19 meeting. I'm the executive director of Glacier-
20 Two Medicine Alliance conservation group, based out of
21 East Glacier Park, Montana.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Peter.

23 So from there, Leanne, do you want to provide a brief
24 overview of the issues or where would you like to start
25 from here?

1 MS. MARTEN: Yes. I can jump in and we'll go
2 from there and see how this all flows.

3 But great to see everyone. Thanks for joining again.
4 And I think I've met most of you. A couple of you, I'm
5 not sure if I've met you in person, but hopefully someday
6 face-to-face we'll be able to do it. But I appreciate you
7 joining virtually. And a couple of you, we went through
8 the Flathead together, and so congratulations for being
9 willing to do this again for three days. So I really
10 appreciate it.

11 I'm going to try -- this one's the wildlife diversity,
12 connectivity, and then, of course, the Endangered Species
13 Act species. We have about, I think it's an hour and a
14 half this morning. Shawn will help us with that. And
15 it's complex, and that's nothing new to any of you folks
16 here. So I'm going to do my best to try and just
17 summarize and jump into some of the proposed remedies and
18 some questions I have to get the dialogue going.

19 And to do that, there's a lot of overlap between the,
20 I'll just say the subcategories of diversity,
21 connectivity, and Endangered Species Act. I'm going to
22 try and keep it a little bit separated, but I know they
23 overlap from that standpoint. So if they start blending,
24 that's okay. You guys help me help you have the right
25 dialogue here, if you would.

1 Again, I'm not going to get into every point that was
2 brought up. You guys have the written objections that you
3 submitted. And I would ask, unless, you know, I have
4 questions, please don't just repeat what you sent in in
5 writing, because we do have those and have read them. So
6 it's really trying to build off of that, from that
7 standpoint. If I'm missing something, though, by all
8 means, that's where I definitely need you to speak up and
9 help me out from that.

10 My overview, I'm going to be working off of -- and
11 keep it really short, because I really want to have time
12 for the dialogue and questions. But I'm going to be
13 working off of the briefing papers that were posted, the
14 Objection Issue Briefing Papers, just as a starting point.
15 And again, these were purposefully broad, because, as you
16 can imagine, some of the objections received could be
17 anywhere from one to two pages, some of them were hundreds
18 of pages long. So there's quite a spectrum there. But
19 it's a starting point from that perspective, and that's
20 all it's intended to be, is to be a starting point.

21 Let me jump in with the wildlife diversity. And in
22 reading through the objections and in looking through the
23 issues, you know, one of the things I saw is, like many of
24 these, we've got different ends of the spectrum on folks's
25 views, which is great. It really helps us try and make

1 the best informed decisions that we can.

2 The thing that kept coming up a lot on this one was
3 difference of opinions and different thoughts on the best
4 scientific information and whether or not it was applied
5 as part of the analysis, and, in some cases, how it was
6 applied. Some of you felt that there were some gaps in
7 that. Some of you felt that some of the things in the
8 draft and proposed plan and decision that were listed as
9 guidelines should be standards. And I'm going to -- I
10 need to tease that out a little bit, so stay tuned on that
11 one.

12 And then there was very specific issues brought up and
13 concerns around a couple species, and particularly bighorn
14 sheep. I want to clarify that whether or not bighorn
15 sheep is a species of conservation concern and included on
16 the regional forester's list for that, that's going to be
17 later this afternoon as part of that. So not that we
18 can't talk a little bit about that, because I know it
19 overlaps, but if it's the species of conservation concern,
20 whether or not it should be on that list or not, I just
21 ask that you hold that until after lunch until
22 Christine Dawe is here as the resolving official -- or
23 reviewing official, excuse me, for that one.

24 But with sheep, there was -- Setting aside whether or
25 not it's an SCC, species of conservation concern, there

1 was concerns about grazing. There was proposed remedies
2 about bringing in maybe some more standards regarding
3 bighorn sheep and domestic grazing and how they interact
4 or don't interact from that. And then this also ties into
5 some of the connectivity issues that were brought forward
6 regarding the connectivity in some of the ecosystems.

7 so let me first, just with the diversity side, is
8 there anything major that I've missed? I know there's a
9 lot of details in what I just briefly summarized, but is
10 there anything major that I just totally missed that you
11 want to make sure, when it came to the issue of diversity,
12 that I'm aware of or from that standpoint before I jump in
13 with a couple questions and get us going?

14 Go ahead, Pete.

15 MR. NELSON: All right. Leanne, it's great to
16 see you. And, you know, we've been talking about
17 diversity issues under the 2012 planning rule since 2012.

18 MS. MARTEN: And before, Pete.

19 MR. NELSON: And before. Defenders have been
20 working on the implementation of the planning rule for --
21 personally, I have for over eight years. And I just want
22 to say, you know, in summary, I feel like we're still
23 grappling with this idea of how the diversity requirements
24 of the planning rule are actually executed in the forest
25 plans.

1 I would say, if I could summarize Defenders' view in
2 one sentence, it would be that we continue to see
3 diversity decisions postponed until the project level. In
4 many cases, the plan simply reiterates rule requirements
5 or uses a desired condition framework that essentially
6 says we're going to figure this out later at the project
7 scale. There's a lot of references to flexibility in the
8 plan and the supporting materials. And it's Defenders'
9 view that the planning regulation actually requires
10 diversity decisions to be made at the plan scale. So many
11 of our concerns stem from that.

12 The policy view that we hold on the regulation -- And
13 Leanne, you know, we talked about this for many years as
14 an advisory committee. Our position has not changed on
15 that issue. That's how we believe the regulation is meant
16 to be interpreted and applied, and we also believe that
17 that's a legal requirement of the National Forest
18 Management Act. Thanks.

19 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Pete. And I
20 appreciate that. And actually, that leads in a little bit
21 to one of the questions. And I'm not sure, Pete, if you
22 have examples, or anybody else, obviously. There were
23 several objectors and objections where the proposed remedy
24 was changing, it said various -- the term was "various
25 guidelines to standards."

1 And, of course, you know, one of the differences, as
2 you guys are aware, that looks very different underneath
3 the 2012 planning rule is guidelines versus standards. So
4 when you're used to what was in the '86 plans versus how
5 it's even displayed and talked about under the
6 2012 planning rule, it is different from that.

7 What I don't have a good feel for and I'm looking for
8 some assistance with is -- You know, and that's a very
9 generic statement, change some of the guidelines to
10 standards. What I could use some help with is if you have
11 specific examples of a guideline that you think would be
12 better as a standard and help me understand the gap you're
13 seeing. What is it you feel is missing if you have
14 currently a guideline that you think should be a standard?
15 I'm having a hard time wrapping my arms around just an
16 example.

17 And that's to anybody who might have that or have an
18 idea and can help me understand how you're thinking or
19 viewing guideline versus standard and any specifics when
20 it comes to the wildlife diversity portion.

21 Okay, don't everybody speak up at once. I need help.
22 This is the interactive part. Help me out here.

23 Go ahead, Pete.

24 MR. NELSON: I was looking through our objection
25 to see if we made that argument specifically. I don't --

1 I think we said some things about guidelines, but others
2 may have made that direct argument. I'm looking to see
3 whether we did. I think there were certain cases where we
4 argued that it was not clear what the purpose of the
5 guideline was, and, therefore, it would be very difficult
6 to interpret compliance.

7 You know, that's a big policy issue with guidelines,
8 is whether the purpose is clear enough to actually allow
9 for the discretion that is provided in the achievement of
10 the guideline to be responsibly followed. I think there
11 was a few cases of that. But others on this panel may
12 have specific remarks on guidelines and standards.

13 I'll continue to search my document, Leanne, for a
14 case study for you.

15 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That would be great. Thanks,
16 Pete.

17 And if you guys have an example that's tied to
18 connectivity or ESA, that's okay too, folks. It doesn't
19 have to be just on the diversity. But I'm just trying to
20 get a better feel for what folks were thinking or an
21 example, if you happen to have one.

22 MR. NELSON: Does the Forest Service have an
23 example of where that objection was applied in a case
24 where you're seeking more information?

25 MS. MARTEN: You know, Katie or Timory, who are

1 on, if they could be looking, and if they have it, by all
2 means, pop in and help me out here, or Deb.

3 Go ahead, Timory.

4 MS. PEEL: A large number of those objections
5 were tied particularly to elk habitat management, which
6 we'll discuss in detail. But there were folks that were
7 concerned that -- related to the guidelines specifically
8 for elk, but a change from standards that we had in the
9 previous plan to just a guideline, reliance on desired
10 conditions, and, you know, given that we have specific
11 requirements to provide for plan consistency with all plan
12 components. I think that some of the objections we had
13 were really about our reliance on that suite of plan
14 components as you spoke to, Pete, the flexibility that
15 maybe people interpret that's associated with that rather
16 than a suite of standards for each specific species.

17 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Thanks. That helps on that.

18 So let me move on to another one while folks are
19 looking here, and maybe this will get a little bit more
20 specific around diversity. And one of the species that
21 came up quite a bit was the bighorn sheep, and, again,
22 setting aside whether or not it's a species of
23 conservation concern temporarily. There was proposed
24 remedies of putting in some standards that would prohibit
25 domestic sheep or goat raising in any of the geographical

1 areas with bighorn sheep or where analysis indicates the
2 risk.

3 And so I guess I'm trying to -- I could use some
4 assistance here on understanding the intent there, you
5 know, versus the desired condition that was written in the
6 plan; the intent between the desired condition obviously
7 not to have the disease transmission from domestic to the
8 bighorn sheep, and what you feel is missing or what would
9 help clarify or help you feel more comfortable, for lack
10 of a better term -- comfort is relative, obviously -- that
11 we're on the same page on not wanting any potential
12 disease to be transmitted or overlap of that grazing from
13 that standpoint.

14 So can folks help me out on concerns on that, how
15 you're seeing it through your lens on how it's currently
16 analyzed in the desired conditions in the draft plan and
17 proposed decision?

18 Go ahead, Jocelyn.

19 MS. LEROUX: I know that we wrote that in our
20 objection, about the bighorn sheep and the issues of
21 disease transmission. And I guess I don't really know how
22 to make it more clear in that we think that there should
23 be a standard that domestic sheep grazing should be
24 eliminated from all of the geographic areas. We wrote
25 extensively on the objection about the past extirpation of

1 bighorn sheep in specific geographic areas. And so simply
2 having a desired condition is not the same as having a
3 standard that would actually ban domestic sheep grazing.

4 MS. MARTEN: So when you say the geographical
5 areas, Jocelyn, you're talking about the ones that are
6 displayed in the forest plan. Are there ones that are of
7 higher concern or is it -- I know it's a concern. Please
8 don't misinterpret me. But is there areas that you feel
9 need more focus than others based on your interpretations
10 of the science and analysis and background there?

11 MS. LEROUX: Well, certainly anywhere that
12 bighorn sheep currently exist, as well as places that
13 FWP has been discussing reintroducing bighorn sheep or
14 anywhere that has suitable habitat for bighorn sheep. So
15 I think that that kind of encompasses all of the
16 geographic areas.

17 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Other thoughts or info on
18 that lens? Because what I'm hearing is you're not
19 feeling -- you don't agree that desired condition is
20 enough, you want a standard that's mandatory, I'll just
21 say more enforceable. You didn't say that word, but I
22 think in the objection, the written part of it, yeah, on
23 that.

24 MS. LEROUX: Yes.

25 MS. MARTEN: Okay. What about monitoring?

1 Any --

2 MR. JOHNSON: Sorry, Leanne. Eric's hand is
3 raised in the little corner there. He's using the digital
4 feature.

5 MS. MARTEN: Good job. I don't have that part
6 on. Sorry, Eric. Go for it.

7 MR. CLEWIS: That's all right. So one of the
8 things we listed in relationship to bighorn sheep is we
9 asked for standards that are more prescriptive in terms of
10 preventing disease transmission.

11 So I commented on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National
12 Forest plan revision, and in there they had a standard
13 that says: In order to prevent disease transmission
14 between wild and domestic sheep, domestic sheep or goat
15 grazing shall not be authorized in or within 16 miles of
16 bighorn sheep occupied core herd home ranges.

17 And I think that's kind of what we're looking for, is
18 something that spells it out more clearly. To me, it's
19 pretty vague as it stands right now. So in relation to
20 the Montana wildlife Federation's stance, we're looking
21 for something that is a standard that's more prescriptive.

22 MS. MARTEN: Okay. You used the Nez Perce-
23 Clearwater as an example. That type of specificity in
24 actually the distance is what you're looking at? So it's
25 not just the general desire, but actually --

1 MR. CLEWIS: Yeah. I think --

2 MS. MARTEN: -- in a certain distance.

3 MR. CLEWIS: Yeah. I think if we can establish
4 some actual numbers and some actual prescriptive
5 guidelines, that will help prevent disease transmission to
6 bighorn sheep. I think if you leave it vague, then, you
7 know, it leaves a lot of room for interpretation, and that
8 can lead to some pitfalls in the future.

9 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So I'm just curious what
10 other objectors or interested parties feel about that.
11 Because, obviously, this is me learning, but it's also
12 trying to make sure you guys are having dialogue. So, you
13 know, I've heard eliminate and then, you know, another
14 potential remedy is you actually have some kind of I'll
15 just say distance, as Eric described.

16 Other thoughts on that proposed remedy versus fully
17 eliminating or a combination or a different way of looking
18 at that?

19 MR. JOHNSON: Not to interrupt the flow of the
20 conversation, so hold your thought, but I saw that our
21 transcriptionist had a hand raised too, and I'm guessing
22 what she wants to remind us of is to state your name the
23 first time you speak so that we capture that.

24 (A brief discussion was held off the record.)

25 MS. MARTEN: I was curious -- Eric mentioned, you

1 know, perhaps a standard to help with the distance.
2 Jocelyn mentioned, you know, a standard eliminating
3 domestic sheep grazing. I'm paraphrasing you folks, so
4 please forgive me. But I'm curious what folks think about
5 Eric's suggestion as one way of trying to remedy --
6 having, you know, something more specific, but it's not a
7 full elimination necessarily.

8 And as you're thinking about that, the other thing
9 that I'm curious about, and we could pull it up
10 specifically, I don't have it at my fingertips, but there
11 are a couple standards in, it's actually in the livestock
12 range portion that refer to doing risk assessments as
13 we're looking at moving forward, and it's regarding
14 specific to bighorn sheep. And so I'd be curious on -- I
15 know, Jocelyn, it doesn't meet the elimination side, but
16 I'd be curious if there's things with those standards you
17 feel could be potentially altered as well, either
18 eliminate or if there's something else in between there.

19 If we need to, we can share the screen, if you guys
20 would find that helpful, on what I'm referencing for those
21 other standards. Would you find that helpful? Okay.

22 I'm not sure who could, but if Wendy or somebody could
23 share the screen with the range, the standards that are in
24 the livestock portion, just so you could get a feel for
25 what I'm referencing.

1 MS. CLARK: I can try to do that. I've not done
2 it before on Zoom, but I can try that. I have two screens
3 here, so that's what I'm not sure about, but give me one
4 second and I'll click this magic green button.

5 MS. MARTEN: And while she's doing that, folks,
6 what I'm trying to get at -- I won't have a set decision
7 today. I'm just trying to get the range of what folks are
8 thinking of and seeing it through your lens from that.

9 MS. CLARK: Can people see this?

10 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. We can see it, Wendy.

11 MS. CLARK: And I cannot see my other controls,
12 but -- so just if you guys want to look at the ones that
13 we're referring to, these are in the livestock grazing
14 section, they're not in the wildlife section. And that's
15 just various decisions that we've made about where best to
16 put things.

17 But standards 3 and 4 are the ones that we have in
18 place that are pertinent to this issue that we're talking
19 about, just as a reference point for what we actually do
20 have in the plan if anyone has forgotten or doesn't have
21 the plan memorized or something.

22 MR. JOHNSON: All right. And this is Shawn. I
23 just want to check to see that everyone can read that.
24 It's a little bit small on my screen, but definitely
25 readable. Happy to read those out loud, if that would be

1 helpful. They're not very long. Does anyone need that or
2 can you see it?

3 Gayle, you were nodding a bit there. Does that mean
4 you can see it or would like us to read it?

5 MS. LEROUX: It means I can see it. Thank you.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Good.

7 MS. MARTEN: So I'd be curious -- And Jocelyn, if
8 you don't mind me asking you, you know, help me
9 understand, when it talks about, you know, as grazing
10 allotments are vacant during the risk assessment, this is
11 apparently not meeting what you desire because you would
12 like it all eliminated. But I'm curious if there's other
13 things here that spark concern with you as it's worded
14 or -- Can you just help me see it through your lens a
15 little clearer?

16 MS. LEROUX: So definitely standard No. 3,
17 stocking of vacant grazing allotments. We don't think
18 that vacant grazing allotments should be stocked with
19 sheep or goats at all.

20 And another concern with the risk assessment tool is
21 this is associated with current bighorn sheep populations,
22 which the Forest Service should be managing to try to
23 increase those populations, as they are relatively small.
24 And so if you're stocking something that has separation
25 from a current population, then it might not actually be

1 appropriate to expand the population in the long term.

2 And so I'll stick with what I said before and what we
3 said in our objection, that we think that you should
4 prohibit permitted sheep and goat grazing.

5 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That's fair. That helps me
6 understand how you're seeing things on that.

7 Eric, just since you brought up the distance one, I'm
8 curious, do you have any thoughts on these standards?
9 They don't have the numeric distance, but like with the
10 risk assessment and that part of it, does this bring up
11 any other thoughts or ideas?

12 MR. CLEWIS: Yeah. So I think the thing I like
13 about having the distance established is, in my mind, it
14 allows for range expansion for bighorn sheep. I think if
15 you do a risk assessment of the populations as they are
16 and stock, like, vacant grazing allotments, then, in my
17 mind, it seems like it's a one-time risk assessment and it
18 doesn't really allow for that range (inaudible). We'd
19 hopefully like to see bighorn sheep range expansion
20 (inaudible) and have them reintroduced into new areas in
21 the future as well. It seems like if you're maintaining a
22 distance, that's kind of more adaptive and can change as
23 the population changes too.

24 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So trying to figure out a way
25 to build in the flexibility; as the bighorn sheep herd

1 shifts, how can we continue to adjust to those -- the
2 natural flexibility of a herd.

3 And I think I heard similar things from you, Jocelyn,
4 from the standpoint of as they're being reintroduced and
5 Fish, Wildlife & Parks is reintroducing bighorn sheep and
6 where they're being reintroduced and taking that into
7 account, setting it up for success. Okay. That helps.

8 Any other thoughts from others on these standards?
9 Concerns or just what you're hearing, just some of the
10 dialogue from that standpoint?

11 And Shawn, you're going to have to help me because I
12 can't see everybody on the screen now. I've got to put
13 them back on a little bit here, so...

14 MR. JOHNSON: A couple of tips there. One,
15 Wendy, I think we can stop sharing your screen, and that
16 will open the screen back up for people.

17 And then for folks that haven't found the button, you
18 can hide non-video participants by clicking on the
19 three dots in the upper right-hand part of your box, and
20 that will just leave those 12, 13 of us that are on video
21 onto your main screen, and that might help with viewing.

22 MS. MARTEN: Thanks.

23 Go ahead, Pete.

24 MR. NELSON: Well, just an observation. I mean,
25 Defenders didn't object to the matter that's being

1 discussed, but the standard requires a procedural action
2 to occur. When does the risk assessment happen? And, you
3 know, I think that gets to a point that we make about
4 plans. You know, it says we're going to figure this out
5 later, we're going to do a risk assessment later on and
6 that's when we're going to make this determination that
7 this standard is ostensibly trying to address. And so I
8 just found that very interesting, because it essentially
9 says we'll figure that out sometime in the future under
10 the plan. But as a practical matter, when does the risk
11 assessment occur?

12 MS. MARTEN: So Pete, I guess a question I'd
13 have, do you have -- I know you have thoughts, but do you
14 have specific ideas maybe? Because that's always a
15 challenge between -- As you know, and everyone here
16 understands, you have the forest plan which is the guiding
17 document, and then, of course, you have your site-specific
18 projects when you go to implement on the ground, and the
19 National Environmental Policy Act analysis and the parts
20 that go with it.

21 You know, forest plans aren't designed to make
22 site-specific decisions. They're trying to put in that
23 guidance for which we operate under. So how do you build
24 in flexibility so as things change, new science is
25 available, things change on the ground, let's say herd

1 sizes, Eric or Jocelyn talked about reintroduction, so you
2 don't get so locked in that it becomes antiquated?

3 MR. NELSON: Well, there's obviously tension on
4 those forces. But the law and the regulation do require
5 that forest plans provide the necessary conditions for
6 viability of persistence and contribution to recovery.
7 And so it's our view that those elements actually have to
8 be in the plan. You need to do your best using best
9 available science and information to provide for that
10 condition through a plan component. And a component that
11 says we're going to figure it out later defers that
12 NFMA-based decision to a future point.

13 And so I understand the tension that you're talking
14 about. But I think it's important that you and the
15 Forest Service also understand the flip side of that
16 tension, which is -- I'm just speaking for myself -- that
17 the stakeholders are seeking the certainty within plans
18 that viability requires. And I think, you know, when we
19 see language that says we're going to assess that later,
20 well, you know, we may not be around later. I may not be
21 here later to address that question at the project scale.

22 The reason I'm working on this plan is because I think
23 these issues should be addressed now, in the plan. I am
24 not following project implementation on the Helena. I'm
25 following forest planning, and I'm looking for viability

1 certainty within the forest plan, not at the project
2 scale.

3 And so, you know, regarding your question on
4 flexibility, Leanne, we've had this conversation many
5 times. The planning rule says we're going to manage
6 adaptively; we're going to put forward what we think are
7 the necessary ecological conditions for viability now, and
8 if we have to amend the plan we're going to do so. I'm
9 seeing a complete retreat from the idea of actually
10 amending plans to change those strategies put forward for
11 viability.

12 what I'm seeing on this plan and many others is we'll
13 figure it out at the project scale. we'll do an
14 assessment later, so on and so forth. whether it's
15 bighorn sheep or bull trout, we're going to do that later,
16 so come back and talk to us again in a year. well, you
17 know, I think the time to do it is now.

18 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Fair enough.

19 And I also, what I hear you saying is the desired
20 condition doesn't meet -- I mean, just stating the desired
21 condition and what we're moving towards is not enough.

22 MR. NELSON: In my view, the desired condition is
23 not necessarily the foreseeable future given that it's
24 aspirational. Therefore, as a regulatory matter, a
25 desired condition does not provide the necessary certainty

1 that the law requires for viability. You know, because
2 desired condition, as we all know, may never be achieved.
3 In fact, using project consistency evaluations, it is okay
4 to retard the achievement of a desired condition over
5 time, and thus, you know, as long as you don't prevent it
6 happening sometime in the future, you can not achieve it
7 every project, essentially.

8 And so a desired condition is just that. That's why
9 it's called desired, because it's aspirational. And if
10 there's not supporting standards and guidelines to
11 actually drive decisionmaking towards the achievement of a
12 desired condition, a desired condition is just that. And
13 I don't believe it's sufficiently regulatory to provide
14 for NFMA regulatory obligations.

15 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

16 MR. NELSON: And, furthermore, I think NEPA has
17 to look at the chances of that desired condition not being
18 achieved. That is something that needs to be disclosed in
19 the effects analysis, because there needs to be an
20 acknowledgment that it is perhaps a condition that may not
21 be achieved, in which case there will be effects over time
22 of not achieving that.

23 MS. MARTEN: Gotcha. Okay. Very helpful.

24 Other thoughts on either what Pete said or other
25 things that you've been hearing?

1 MR. JOHNSON: And Matthew, I saw your hand was up
2 there for a second. Did you want to still weigh in?

3 MR. BISHOP: Yeah. Sure. I just had a question
4 for Leanne. This is Matthew Bishop. This kind of gets to
5 what Pete was touching on.

6 Now, as you know, the 2012 planning regulations
7 require, actually, you must provide for diversity of plant
8 and animal communities on the forest. And it seems like
9 with this particular forest plan revision, that you've
10 chosen to go to more guidelines or desired future
11 conditions and shy away from standards. I guess my
12 question is how does the Forest make that determination
13 between whether or not to adopt, say, a standard, which
14 gives us a little bit more certainty, or to go with a
15 guideline, which I imagine maybe gives you some more
16 flexibility?

17 I'd be curious to know how that decision is made at
18 the Forest, first. And then my second part of that
19 question is does the Forest Service intend to comply with
20 all of the guidelines laid out in the forest plan to the
21 extent that they replace standards that existed before?

22 Thank you.

23 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. You bet, Matthew. Great
24 questions. And, you know, for me to go into all the
25 detail in how the Helena-Lewis and Clark determined this

1 is a guideline, this is a standard, you know, I don't have
2 the ability to go into and get into the thought process of
3 the forest supervisor specifically on that.

4 sara, if you want to jump in here, please do in a
5 second.

6 But what I will say, though, as the underlying
7 foundation is -- And this is definitely a shift in the
8 2012 planning rule. You know, a guideline is, I'll just
9 say, a constraint. The only way we can depart from what
10 we have written as a guideline is we have to be able to
11 show how we're still meeting the overall objectives that
12 the guideline was set up for. And many of the guidelines,
13 if you notice, are very specific, specifically written. A
14 standard is mandatory.

15 So on one hand, Matthew, you're absolutely correct. A
16 guideline, you do have a little bit more flexibility, but
17 it's not that you can just ignore a guideline. We have to
18 meet guidelines. We have to meet the guidelines and the
19 objectives that were set up for that guideline. They
20 built in a little bit more flexibility because, over time,
21 how we meet those objectives and our ability -- Some of
22 the, I don't know, authorizations that we have in the
23 federal government entity, some of the technology, if it
24 happens to be any kind of, say, thinning or fuels
25 treatment just as an example, some of the recreational

1 desires that the public has, it changes over time.

2 And so that's where, you know, the tools we have may
3 shift, but we still have to meet that objective. We can't
4 just say, oh, this is a guideline, therefore we're just
5 not going to pay attention to it. We're still held
6 accountable to the guidelines on that. They are a little
7 bit more flexible than the standard. A standard, you
8 know, to not meet a standard or to not meet the objective
9 of a guideline would require a change to the forest plan
10 on that part of it. And there's processes for that.

11 I totally understand. And Pete, I hear what you're
12 saying. There are some differences in interpretation of
13 the 2012 planning rule and the policies and the directives
14 and how we view that as an agency and how I know some of
15 you have, and there is a tension there. Absolutely.

16 Pete and I worked together for years on the
17 FACA Committee that I know some of you others were
18 involved with even before the -- as we were doing the
19 directives associated with the 2012 planning rule. And
20 it's always robust dialogue. And, you know, I wish I
21 could say we could always 100 percent be on the same page.
22 But I know that there is just some inherent differences on
23 that part of it, and we recognize that.

24 So when you're at the forest level working on the
25 revision as to what becomes a standard and a guideline,

1 you know, there's the professional opinions, there's the
2 analysis. Public involvement and engagement ties into it.
3 There's all different variables that tie into that, on
4 what becomes a standard or guideline. There have been
5 some shifts between a standard and guideline between the
6 draft and the final based on public engagement and public
7 comment on the draft EIS and draft plan that went out.
8 But there isn't a hard, fast this is always a standard,
9 this is always a guideline.

10 The other thing is we've been trying really hard, and
11 under the 2012 planning rule, not to repeat a law or a
12 regulation or something in a standard, which is a shift
13 from previous forest plans that were done in the '80s on
14 that part of it. So some people have said, well, you're
15 missing the standard; and in some cases, yes, we took
16 something out that was a standard, but it's actually a
17 law. But that is confusing at times on that.

18 Sara, did you have anything else to add to that from
19 that perspective with Matthew's question?

20 MS. MAYBEN: No, I think you did a really good
21 job of capturing it. I think the way I'm interpreting a
22 guideline is we have an intention of achieving it, we're
23 just not going to be prescriptive as to how we're going to
24 achieve it, because, like you said, things will change
25 over time. I mean, who would have thought about e-bikes

1 in 1986, you know, as an example.

2 MS. MARTEN: So let me use that as a segue.

3 And Matthew, if we didn't answer your question, please
4 let us know. Not that you have to agree with our answer,
5 I'm okay disagreeing too. But did we at least give you an
6 idea or capture some of what you were trying to get at?
7 Okay. Great. Thanks.

8 So as I'm thinking about the diversity and the
9 conversation we've been having and thinking about the
10 connectivity and some of the concerns that came up -- and
11 again, these bleed with connectivity. You know, one of
12 the remedies that came up was talking about a spatial map
13 for the connectivity areas and the plan components and
14 actually having it as a visual. And I guess I'm curious
15 what folks's thoughts were on that.

16 Do you feel like by not having a map, it's not aiding
17 because there's just not a visual and the words aren't
18 clear? Is it that the words could be interpreted
19 differently and you just don't understand? Is it just a
20 preference to have a visual versus words? I guess I'm
21 just trying to figure out again if there's a gap there or
22 what was missing that brought up could we have a
23 connectivity map and what the thought process is there.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Leanne. Bonnie Rice has
25 raised her hand.

1 So Bonnie, do you want to jump in?

2 MS. RICE: Sure. Thanks, Shawn and Leanne. We
3 brought up in our objection some things in regard to
4 connectivity specifically for grizzly bears. And I think
5 part of what we've been talking about was what we raised
6 in our objection in terms of there were quite a few
7 geographic areas that had a desired condition for
8 connectivity, but there really weren't any plan components
9 for connectivity for grizzly bears outside of what's in
10 the NCDE Conservation Strategy and the Grizzly Bear
11 Amendment.

12 And so we are particularly concerned about the lack of
13 provisions and plan components for connectivity in regard
14 to Zone 2. And, of course, the purpose of Zone 2 in that
15 delineation was really to provide connectivity between the
16 NCDE and the GYE grizzly bear populations. And so in
17 terms of the specific question about a map, I think that
18 would be helpful in terms of if there was more detailed
19 mapping in terms of connectivity for grizzly bears in
20 particular.

21 I know that one thing we've seen and some people
22 raised in objections is, for instance, in the
23 Custer Gallatin to the south, there were specific linkage
24 areas identified and some very specific plan components in
25 addition to desired conditions for those linkage areas.

1 And so part of our suggested remedies for connectivity for
2 grizzly bears is to extend protections that are in Zone 1
3 to Zone 2, particularly in regard to livestock and road
4 density, motorized access, vegetation management for
5 providing hiding cover, and those kinds of things.

6 So again, our overarching concern is that in that
7 zone, which is specifically for connectivity, in this case
8 for grizzly bears, really, they're just desired conditions
9 for a lot of the GAs and nothing beyond that to actually
10 really achieve both genetic and demographic connectivity.
11 Because we believe both of those are important and not
12 only the movement of male bears into that zone for genetic
13 connectivity.

14 MS. MARTEN: That's great, Bonnie. That helps me
15 understand the perspective of what I was reading from the
16 objections.

17 The question I would have -- I'm trying to figure out
18 how to word this. So if I think about the geographical
19 demographics of the Helena-Lewis and Clark, you have a lot
20 of islands. I mean, there's a lot of intermixed ownership
21 in between the national forest and the lands, hence the
22 geographical areas, and using some of those as a
23 foundation with the planning.

24 The question I would have for you and others is how do
25 you see -- You know, the forest plan is for the federal

1 ownership, and, of course, we work as best we can with our
2 partners in other jurisdictions. There's a lot of private
3 land, there's a lot of state, there's a lot of tribal,
4 BLM, and others. How do we map something like that?
5 Because it would be broken. I mean, even if we tried to,
6 you would see one and then you would still see some broken
7 segments, in my mind. So can you help me with that, what
8 your thought is?

9 MS. RICE: Yeah. And I think there are some
10 challenges there, for sure, because there is a lot of
11 private land intermixed there. But I think that, you
12 know, there is some research out there in terms of some
13 mapping for some of those linkage routes, you know,
14 between the NCDE and the GYE that would be through the
15 Helena-Lewis and Clark. So I think just incorporating
16 some of that more.

17 But, you know, we understand that you don't have
18 jurisdiction over private lands; right? But in terms of
19 the federal lands and extending protections, again, Zone 1
20 protection to Zone 2 or something on federal lands, I
21 mean, all of that helps to achieve connectivity. And it's
22 not like you can prescribe what can happen on private
23 lands, but I think the Forest Service could certainly be
24 more proactive and more prescriptive in terms of ensuring
25 the highest level of protections possible in the habitat

1 that you are managing on the Helena-Lewis and Clark to
2 help grizzly bears and other wide-ranging species achieve
3 that kind of connectivity between the two ecosystems.

4 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you,
5 Bonnie, from that perspective.

6 Other thoughts on that? I see Pete.

7 Go ahead, Pete.

8 MR. NELSON: Okay. I don't want to jump in front
9 of anyone. Thank you. I echo many of Bonnie's thoughts
10 on this. Regarding the map specifically, it's very
11 difficult for the reader of the plan to understand how
12 that connectivity direction for Zone 2 is going to be
13 interpreted. At this point, there's some subjective, you
14 know, discretion given again at the project scale to then
15 identify what those important connectivity areas are in
16 Zone 2. But the reader can't figure that out. It's
17 another piece of the puzzle we're going to -- that's going
18 to be determined later at the project scale.

19 If you look at some of the projects that are coming
20 online, for example, the Middleman Project on the
21 Helena-Lewis and Clark, these are big-time projects
22 extending for 15 years, 10 or 15 years, with significant
23 disturbance events associated with them. I think the
24 forest plan can do justice to supporting that sort of
25 landscape thinking by providing more specificity at the

1 plan level.

2 So, for example, I agree with what Bonnie is saying.
3 There's enough information, if you look at those plan
4 components for connectivity, they lead you to a point of
5 actually establishing more in this plan about what should
6 be happening in Zone 2 and not -- and making those
7 decisions now as opposed to kind of punting them and
8 kicking the can a little bit.

9 You know, we agree with the Sierra Club. There's not
10 enough in the plan to support demographic and genetic
11 connectivity between the NCDE and Greater Yellowstone
12 populations. You know, we think that that's actually a
13 meaningful requirement under NFMA, to look at genetic
14 connectivity between the populations and not just remain
15 focused on the NCDE piece of the equation. That's a key
16 piece of the equation in this planning area, but the idea
17 here is to contribute to the recovery of grizzly bears,
18 and that means providing those necessary conditions,
19 including those connectivity conditions, that are needed
20 for both populations. You know, we wrote a lot about this
21 also.

22 But to your point, Leanne, I think it starts to look
23 like you're creating management areas for grizzly bears by
24 all this combination of plan components, the
25 identification of linkage areas and important areas for

1 connectivity. I would suggest that you go a step further
2 and actually bundle that information up a little bit more
3 in the plan, provide a little bit more structure to it, so
4 that the readers of the plan get a better sense of where
5 things are going in in Zone 2 and beyond.

6 MS. MARTEN: And you just answered one of the
7 questions I was wondering, Pete. Similar to what Bonnie
8 said, it's really the Zone 2 and the connectivity and the
9 happenings in zone 2 that's really where we're trying to
10 get more clarity, be it a map or components or something
11 to enhance what the intent is on the Zone 2.

12 Go ahead, Bonnie.

13 MS. RICE: I would say also just that Zone 2 is
14 particularly important, and I'd just like to emphasize
15 that the Helena-Lewis and Clark, you know, is really
16 obviously very key in terms of connecting those
17 two ecosystems. But also, I would say to look at where
18 grizzly bears are expanding also.

19 You know, one thing that we noticed is that we are
20 glad to see desired conditions added for some geographic
21 areas in the final plan, but one that is still lacking is
22 the Little Belts, which I know are not in Zone 2, but
23 we've seen grizzly bears there in terms of there's been
24 documentation of bears recently. And so I just, you know,
25 would want to not leave that out and just only have that

1 narrow lens of Zone 2, because there are other areas that
2 we need to be looking at. And so I think there should be
3 plan components for the Little Belts as well.

4 MS. MARTEN: That's a good clarification.

5 Thanks, Bonnie. You know, it's an okay challenge if we
6 have more bears; right? That was the intent, trying to
7 get the species and the population back. But it's a
8 challenge because they have wide ranges, and so what do
9 you do with that, with the multiple use that we're trying
10 to manage out there? So that's helpful to get a feel for
11 where it seems is unclear. And then the geographical
12 area, the Little Belts, Bonnie, that you're thinking of as
13 well helps me understand, again, what I was reading and
14 puts a little bit better context on it for me.

15 Other thoughts or ideas either with the grizzly bear,
16 but I know there were a few other things with just the
17 connectivity or any just general concerns or thoughts in a
18 particular area that you want to make sure I don't miss on
19 that part of it? And again, I know it's bleeding with
20 diversity in some of this too.

21 So Shawn, help me if you see hands. I'm not seeing
22 physical hands, so if you see the virtual hands, let me
23 know.

24 MR. JOHNSON: I will. Yes.

25 MS. MARTEN: So a couple things -- I'm hearing a

1 couple real themes here for me to be considering and
2 looking at between the diversity and connectivity parts of
3 it. And, you know, one of them is just desired conditions
4 versus plan components, guidelines, and standards and just
5 really what is meant by those, which ones really, what's
6 the term I want to use, hold us more accountable, I'll
7 just use that. None of you guys used that term.

8 But some of it is a difference of interpretation, but
9 also what's done to the plan versus the project level and
10 some of that point there; and specific to a couple
11 species, the bighorn sheep and a couple of the species,
12 the grizzly bear, and some of the connectivity. It's just
13 really trying to make sure that we're clear.

14 Some of that, perhaps some more distance, like bighorn
15 sheep like you brought up, Eric, as an example, or a
16 visual or a map like you were bringing up, Bonnie, and
17 Pete and others, on the grizzly bear or being more clear,
18 as you said, Jocelyn, don't allow domestic sheep grazing.
19 You know, just something a little bit more tangible to
20 help clarify on an option and a remedy that folks are
21 wanting me to consider from that standpoint.

22 The other thing that I've heard, and Pete, I'm hearing
23 very clear from you -- And some of it, as I said, is
24 different approaches on how we interpret the planning rule
25 and what we do at the forest plan and the project level.

1 But part, as I digest that, is thinking through -- not
2 agree or disagree with one way or the other, but just
3 making it really clear in the record of decision whichever
4 way we go and spelling out in some of these cases --

5 For instance, this is a question for you, Pete, and I
6 don't expect you to have to have an answer off the top of
7 your head one way or the other. But I'm thinking in the
8 allotment management plan and the grazing one that we
9 talked about, would it be helpful, on some of these that
10 you have real concern about, spelling out in the record of
11 decision more clear when some of that would be done or how
12 some of that would be addressed versus seemingly -- what
13 I'm hearing you saying is it seems to be hanging, we may
14 or may not do it, it's just a piece of the puzzle.

15 Something to think about. And again, you don't have
16 to answer off the top of your head if you don't want to.
17 But I'm just trying to figure out if there's a way for us
18 to clarify or be more clear on if there's certain areas
19 where the next steps could be articulated more apparent
20 and help with that at all. If that even made sense.

21 MR. NELSON: Well, this is Pete Nelson. I'll
22 respond. I mean, one, I think my primary point is that
23 there's a certain amount of decisionmaking that needs to
24 occur in the plan and deferring those NFMA decisions to
25 the project level is -- I mean, yeah, I agree that this is

1 maybe where we're having a policy dispute here, but I also
2 think that that's what the policy requires.

3 MS. MARTEN: Yes.

4 MR. NELSON: That being said, I think any time,
5 Leanne, because you're understanding where we're coming
6 from, you can provide more information on relationships
7 between the plan and the projects and how those really
8 work well together is useful to the public. Now, I'm not
9 submitting that as a position of Defenders, that we are
10 seeking to defer those decisions to the projects. But,
11 you know, I think anything that kind of helps the reader
12 and the stakeholder understand the relationship is useful.

13 Because it feels like, at times, we're in planning now
14 and don't worry about it now, we're going to get to that
15 later. And I think there's probably a lot of the public
16 that is saying, well, we want to talk about it now, we
17 don't want to talk about it at the project scale. So I
18 think any conversation that helps people like me
19 understand that and how the parameters that are in the
20 plan are going to continue to drive project decisionmaking
21 and keep projects within, you know, a certain degree of
22 rigidity is helpful.

23 Because I'm reading it now and I'm looking at kind of
24 open-ended project planning processes that are going to
25 be re -- we're going to talk about all this again when we

1 get to the project level? That's what it feels like to
2 me. Like, we'll get to a project and we'll be discussing
3 grizzly bear connectivity issues in Zone 2, when I feel
4 like, as a matter of efficiency and effectiveness, we
5 could just have that conversation now as opposed to having
6 it ten years from now in ten different places.

7 MS. MARTEN: No, that helps, Pete, and I totally
8 get from the standpoint of, the position of where the
9 Defenders is at on that part of it.

10 Let me ask you this: You referred to, and this is
11 just me trying to have a better understanding, you know,
12 the viability decisions and the standards versus the risk
13 assessment. Can you help me, what do you see as a
14 viability decision? How are you thinking of that from
15 that standpoint?

16 MR. NELSON: Okay. I'll take that. This is
17 Pete. So I think the point I want to make clear is that
18 Defenders believes that the regulation requires the
19 ecological condition that is necessary for viability to be
20 articulated in the plan; that that condition -- It's a set
21 of conditions. It's not just habitat conditions, it's
22 also human uses and disturbances, including security for
23 the case of many different species. Those conditions are
24 informed by the assessment, which articulated conditions
25 necessary for persistence and viability based on BASI.

1 It's Defenders' view that those conditions should be
2 easily understood at the plan level so that we have a high
3 degree of confidence that the condition is actually going
4 to be provided. Now, a desired condition for that
5 necessary condition for viability is a great place to
6 start, but there's also this point that you may not
7 achieve that desired condition, and it's in those cases
8 where we are looking for supporting standards or
9 guidelines to achieve the condition.

10 I do think that NEPA plays a fundamental role here,
11 because it's in that disclosure process that the public
12 can understand the Agency's thinking on how that
13 condition -- to project whether that condition is actually
14 going to be achieved, and thus whether viability will be
15 provided for. In a lot of the cases, we look at the EIS
16 and it's not clear if the condition is going to be
17 achieved or what the effect of all the other plan
18 components for other uses is having on that condition.

19 Again, it feels like we're going to get to the project
20 scale and we're going to have this conversation again at
21 that point. As we know, at the project scale, we're not
22 going to see the similar types of analyses that we're used
23 to; for example, BEs for sensitive species. It's going to
24 look different. And so at the plan level, it places a --
25 without the regional forester's sensitive species policy

1 in place, it creates a larger burden I think at the plan
2 level to actually really articulate what those desired
3 conditions for viability are, and the public needs a high
4 degree of confidence that they're actually going to be
5 met.

6 Anyways, that's my general view on it. I think the
7 closer we can get to that, the better we'll be down the
8 road as we jump into project implementation.

9 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That helps. Thanks, Pete.
10 And I hear -- you know, one of the things that folks fully
11 recognize is we do the best we can, of course, at the plan
12 level, and, you know, we're not going to please everybody.
13 And we understand that, but we're doing the best we can to
14 have the guiding document to try and fulfill desires and
15 needs for the public as we are having a document to guide
16 the management of your lands.

17 At the project level, sometimes what happens is, you
18 know, people get more involved at that level than the
19 planning level because, you know, it's place specific and
20 the interests are there. And so some of this stuff is
21 going to come up regardless, and we get that, but how you
22 can tier back to the plan -- part of what I hear you
23 saying, Pete, not the whole thing, is being able to have
24 that bridge back to the plan be clearer and maybe a little
25 bit more crisper so we don't just rehash the same thing.

1 You know, people may still disagree or agree and have that
2 whole spectrum, but at least we have a more definitive
3 bridge from the plan to the project level versus trying
4 to, I don't know, feel like we're rebuilding the bridge
5 over and over again.

6 How do you like that for metaphors? I got a bridge in
7 there. Don't ask me why, but that's what worked on that.

8 So thank you. That helps on that part of it.

9 You know, I wanted to make sure, the other thing that
10 was running in my mind as I'm thinking diversity,
11 connectivity, and then the endangered species, you know,
12 grizzly bear is definitely one of them, but there were a
13 couple others that some of you brought up very
14 specifically, and that was lynx and wolverine. And again,
15 I know wolverine I believe is part of the discussion on
16 the species of conservation concern, whether it's listed
17 or not listed, so we're setting that part aside.

18 But there were a couple remedies there similar to the
19 grizzly bear -- and it may be the same underlying
20 foundations for it, but there were a couple remedies on
21 the lynx that brought up adopting additional standards to
22 ensure appropriate management of the lynx winter habitat,
23 updating some standards. And, of course, that's from the
24 amendment.

25 But I'm wondering if anybody has specific -- And it's

1 a similar question that I've asked. Help me understand
2 what's missing, what standard is missing for the lynx that
3 you feel would add to and benefit management of the
4 habitat, winter habitat for the lynx from that standpoint.
5 There's a gap there that you guys are feeling and some of
6 you are feeling as objectors. I'm trying to figure out
7 what that gap is, if it's something very specific,
8 overall, or if there's a standard or two or wording that
9 would help fill that gap, in your opinion. Can someone
10 help me out with that one?

11 MR. JOHNSON: Who wants to jump in? Either just
12 raise your hand or take yourself off mute. Jump in.

13 It looks like Pete.

14 MR. NELSON: Well, Leanne, we didn't have a --
15 I'm just going over my letter, which I should know like
16 the back of my hand, but it's long.

17 MS. MARTEN: That's okay. I should know a lot of
18 mine too, Pete, and I don't. I have to look them up.

19 MR. NELSON: I think what's interesting for me
20 for lynx is it kind of epitomizes one of the issues I've
21 been talking about. The FEIS says something to the effect
22 that the BASI suggests that 50 percent more of lynx
23 habitat within the LAU should be in the multistory
24 structural stage, and this will be considered and
25 incorporated when appropriate at the project planning

1 scale.

2 So here you have a case of the EIS saying the BASI
3 reflects a condition, but that that condition is not going
4 to be put in the plan as a desired condition for lynx
5 recovery and viability, but it's going to be purposefully
6 addressed at the project level. And our comment was
7 obviously that, you know, that should be in the plan.

8 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

9 MR. NELSON: And there were a number of cases
10 where we thought the desired conditions for lynx recovery
11 were actually not present in the plan and could have been
12 presented as desired conditions.

13 There was also another case of kind of a failure to
14 identify spatial-specific locations. There was no WUI
15 mapping. As you know, there are exceptions to lynx
16 requirements based on the WUI, but without knowledge of
17 that overlap, the public doesn't have a sense of where
18 those exceptions are going to apply. And there's also a
19 lynx connectivity mapping issue again where the plan
20 refers to important connectivity areas for lynx, but we
21 don't understand where those are.

22 So again, we're going to wrangle over that when we get
23 to the project planning, it sounds like. Then we're going
24 to get out the maps and we're going to look at
25 connectivity for lynx. It's our view that all of that

1 information can be elevated and contained in the plan to
2 better support lynx conservation.

3 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Thanks. And that was one of
4 my other questions, was the WUI. There was a proposed
5 remedy of a map of the WUI area and the exceptions, and
6 you just answered that.

7 You know, one of the things with wildland-urban
8 interface and the mapping, as you're aware, Pete, that
9 isn't just based on what we map. That's working with the
10 communities and, you know, many others helping map that.
11 And so that again can just, it can change over time based
12 on populations, on where communities do or don't go from
13 that standpoint.

14 So what I hear you saying is not that we don't stay
15 flexible, but at least, like you said I think earlier, and
16 I can't remember which species, a starting point, and then
17 if things change, there's a process you go through to
18 update from that standpoint part of it.

19 And so I would be curious what others' thoughts are,
20 because I don't think Defenders is the only one that
21 brought up the lynx, or if Pete summarized some of your
22 guys's thoughts from that standpoint.

23 Go ahead, Matt -- Matthew. Sorry. I don't know if
24 you go by Matt or Matthew.

25 MR. BISHOP: Oh, Matt's fine. Matt Bishop here

1 again. And we raised some of the lynx issues more
2 indirectly through the big game standard issues we'll be
3 talking about this afternoon.

4 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

5 MR. BISHOP: Just one of the points that we want
6 to raise is that I think a lot of the standards that are
7 in the Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment which you guys
8 obtained are decent and good, but they're a little
9 outdated. I think they were developed back in 2006. And
10 how LAUs were mapped and delineated and including linkage
11 zones, all that was good at the time, but my understanding
12 is there's been a lot of new science since then
13 suggesting -- And I don't know off the top of my head what
14 the percentages are, but Pete referenced one of them about
15 percentages of multistory habitat being retained in the
16 LAU, those types of things.

17 My understanding is there's been a lot of science
18 since then that suggested those figures maybe need to be
19 reevaluated and tweaked, and we might need to be providing
20 more, not less, habitat for the certain areas where we
21 know we have lynx. Because what I'm seeing with the
22 science is we have smaller populations that remain more
23 isolated. And I know in the Helena-Lewis and Clark, we've
24 seen a lot of range contraction since listing.

25 And so at least from my perspective, I don't think

1 lynx are doing very well in the Northern Rockies. And I
2 think there's more opportunity here, since you guys are
3 the primary landowner -- probably over 90 percent of lynx
4 habitat in the West is managed by the National Forest --
5 for you guys to be doing more on lynx. And I think this
6 is a real opportunity to do that, both in terms of sort of
7 updating the Northern Rockies lynx management direction,
8 looking at the new science, and maybe tweaking or revising
9 some of the LAUs and the connectivity areas.

10 which, by the way, there is a decent map that's
11 produced in the Lynx Amendment of lynx movement and
12 linkage areas. Those areas are identified along the
13 Continental Divide. MacDonald Pass, for instance, is a
14 very important one, where you guys manage a very narrow
15 area there where we've -- You know, we've had some fights
16 in the past about the biathlon project and things where,
17 you know, it's a very important area that's managed by the
18 National Forest, and I think it deserves to be sort of
19 managed more, not just for lynx but other species movement
20 up and down the Continental Divide.

21 So anyway, I'm rambling a little bit, but that's -- My
22 take we have with the lynx is I would like us to be doing
23 more on lynx, and this is an opportunity to do it.

24 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. No, very helpful,
25 Matt. You know, in paraphrasing, new science, how is it

1 used, was it used, being more clear, and if we didn't use
2 it why not based on what's in the current amendment from
3 that standpoint. And then again, it sounds like -- Am I
4 hearing correctly that a visual may be helpful in some of
5 these cases, not just for the lynx, but, depending on the
6 situation, a visual of some type? Oftentimes is it
7 helpful in understanding?

8 MR. BISHOP: Yeah. I think that someone brought
9 it up earlier in the connectivity conversation, but I do
10 think having a map -- Obviously, we prefer to have
11 standards for managing for connectivity, but having a map
12 showing the areas that are important for connectivity, not
13 just for lynx but for other species as well, would be
14 extremely beneficial. And some in ways, you could be more
15 proactive about it to avoid certain projects or activities
16 that are very contentious and often end in litigation.

17 You know, if you had that map, maybe you would -- it
18 would inform those decisions in advance of even doing
19 scoping.

20 MS. MARTEN: No, very helpful. And, of course,
21 you guys know the challenge is if I -- Just like for you,
22 if I was talking just one species and that's all I had to
23 manage for versus multiple species and humans and
24 everything else, it would be a lot easier. So I
25 appreciate the assistance and your patience with me

1 teasing out and just trying to make sure I'm understanding
2 what would or wouldn't be useful, helpful. And again,
3 just how you're seeing it from your lens is extremely
4 helpful. I wish I could do black-and-white answers to
5 everything, as I'm sure guys do too on that.

6 Other thoughts on either diversity, connectivity, the
7 endangered species part of the wildlife? I want to make
8 sure that I'm not missing something totally -- that you
9 guys felt was totally missed. Or anything that has come
10 up during the conversation, others that haven't had an
11 opportunity to get your voice in the room that you want to
12 make sure I know or your fellow colleague and objector or
13 interested party sitting on the call here has an
14 opportunity to have a dialogue around?

15 Sara, as people are thinking, questions you may have
16 or anything else to help you as we move forward in
17 understanding?

18 MS. MAYBEN: No, I think this is really -- I
19 think it's helpful in the context of the life of this
20 plan, how prescriptive do we want to be versus how much
21 flexibility do we want to have as we manage in the future.
22 So no, I think the dialogue has been very helpful.

23 MS. MARTEN: That's great.

24 The one thing I'll also bring up, and I can't
25 remember, it may be down the road. It may be this

1 afternoon when we talk about elk, but I'll plant a couple
2 seeds on this and just make sure I'm not missing
3 something.

4 There were a couple times when it came to species, and
5 again, I can't remember if it was specific to lynx or
6 grizzly or sheep, but where some of the remedies were
7 keep -- or bring forward some of the standards from the
8 '86 plan. And I guess if any of you have those, one of
9 the things that would help me is are we talking the Helena
10 plan or the Lewis and Clark plan? And the reason I say
11 that is, as you guys are aware, we've had a consolidation
12 of two administrative forests, and those two plans on some
13 of these things were different.

14 And so if you have ideas with that, it would just help
15 me when you are articulating it, because I think some of
16 you may be part of the elk one -- and I'll repeat this at
17 that time -- which plan you may be referring to. Because
18 they were done differently in '86 as well.

19 But I'll throw that out. Is there any of that
20 particularly that was ringing a bell for any of the, like
21 the sheep or lynx, grizzly, the ones, connectivity,
22 diversity, that you guys were thinking of? I just don't
23 want to miss it if there was something specific for me to
24 be aware of.

25 Pete, go ahead.

1 MR. NELSON: This is Pete with Defenders. The
2 only thing we really said about that is that when we're
3 changing from the current to the revised plan, it's
4 important that the NEPA analysis look at the conversion of
5 standards to guidelines or dropping standards. Because I
6 think it's important that the public understand that
7 choice.

8 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

9 MR. NELSON: We decided to drop standards from
10 our old plan. Okay. Let's understand the effects of
11 doing that. And I think that's a lot of -- that would go
12 a long way in helping this issue of people seeing changes
13 from more standards-and-guidelines-based forest plans to
14 other more desired-condition-based forest plans. But the
15 EIS references flexibility 36 times in the document. We
16 counted.

17 MS. MARTEN: I was going to say, you must have
18 counted, Pete. I'm impressed.

19 MR. NELSON: We can count.

20 MS. MARTEN: I'm sorry. That came out really
21 wrong.

22 MR. NELSON: So we went further than that. We
23 then looked at what that analysis meant, like what -- The
24 provision of flexibility is obviously something that's
25 desired here by the Agency. And so, okay, you get to make

1 your choices.

2 what we're looking for in the EIS is a discussion of
3 what that flexibility yields in terms of environmental
4 effects. And in essentially all cases, there was no
5 discussion of what flexibility -- the provision of
6 flexibility at the plan level, what would be the effect on
7 at-risk species of pursuing that pathway. And Leanne, as
8 you think about your response to objections and your ROD,
9 you know, I just want to plant that idea for you.

10 Because some stakeholders are saying we think there's
11 going to be negative effects associated with a flexible
12 plan. And anything that you can do to raise confidence
13 that that's not the case I think would just helpful as a
14 general matter.

15 MS. MARTEN: That's very helpful, Pete. I hadn't
16 thought about that. Yeah, how you view flexibility, i.e.,
17 flexibility as a manager to use latest and greatest tools,
18 science, and all that can be potentially positive. But,
19 you know, a lot of it is trust relationships, confidence
20 that we may or may not have with all of our stakeholders
21 and members of the public from that. So how do you build
22 that in? You're never going to be perfect, but -- And my
23 apologies if that came out wrong about the "flexibility"
24 and counting. I didn't mean it bad on that. But yeah,
25 that's good input. Thank you. I appreciate that.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Leanne, we've got a number of hands
2 up here now, so Bonnie and then Cheryl, our court
3 reporter, and then Al. Let's check in quickly with
4 Cheryl.

5 (A brief discussion was held off the record.)

6 MR. JOHNSON: Bonnie.

7 MS. RICE: Thanks, Shawn.

8 Bonnie Rice with the Sierra Club. Leanne, I just
9 wondered if you could say a little bit more, reflect on,
10 you know, with the Helena-Lewis and Clark final plan now
11 incorporating the grizzly bear movement -- I'm going back
12 to grizzly bears and connectivity. You know,
13 incorporating the Grizzly Bear Amendment, I know you have
14 that direction, but I'm just wondering if you could
15 speak to, you know, when you're thinking about that and
16 then thinking about the importance of the Helena-Lewis and
17 Clark National Forest for achieving connectivity for
18 grizzly bears and other wide-ranging species and the
19 important role that it plays just with the geographic
20 position of the forest.

21 Like, how do you think about your flexibility in being
22 stronger than the Grizzly Bear Amendment in terms of some
23 of the things that we were talking about before, about,
24 you know, adding more plan components that are more
25 specific that will really help achieve that connectivity

1 and just being more proactive with stronger protections
2 than what's in the Grizzly Bear Amendment, you know, and
3 your flexibility there?

4 And I guess also, I would just add one of the remedies
5 that we've proposed too is extending protections and being
6 more specific in terms of motorized access, livestock,
7 recreation, those kinds of things, but then also thinking
8 about the tool of recommended wilderness to be able to get
9 at some of those things as well.

10 MS. MARTEN: So great question, Bonnie. And
11 here's how -- here's the best I can answer that, because
12 there is no set answer on it. But here's how I think
13 about it. We have the Grizzly Bear Amendment that's
14 incorporated into the revision. The flexibility of the
15 process builds in that we could be more conservative and
16 stricter, as you put it, than the amendment if we choose
17 to be. I mean, the process allows that through just this,
18 the planning process and the rules and the directives and
19 public engagement and all of that.

20 I don't have a feel one way or the other on where we
21 should land, which is why we're going through this. Bill
22 has his draft decision out, as you know, because you've
23 been part of it, as well as extensive other folks on the
24 call today and others. Extensive public engagement, and
25 there's a lot of things that just have a lot of different

1 complexities that enter into it.

2 So the one thing that I don't have the luxury of doing
3 is just looking at it just grizzly bear centric or lynx
4 centric or a species or recreation or veg. You know, it's
5 everything pulled together, which is the complexities and
6 the joy and the challenges of natural resource management.
7 You know, it's never boring, by any means, because there's
8 all that that ties into it, and the human social part of
9 it.

10 So I don't -- you're not going to hear me say that we
11 have a need to do different than the amendment, because I
12 don't know. That's why I'm listening and learning from
13 this standpoint and looking at the analysis and the
14 objections that came in around that. I will say that the
15 process allows us, regardless of where the decision goes
16 out, to use monitoring and to shift in the future should
17 new information come to light, scientifically or the bear
18 population does something different, humans have a
19 different interaction, or what have you.

20 So that's how I kind of view it, is trying to figure
21 out how do we set ourselves up for the best success with
22 the multiple resources -- grizzly being definitely one of
23 them, and, of course, we have the ESA and everything -- to
24 build in what we can to try and meet the multiple-use
25 needs that we have on the national forest on that. The

1 amendment, of course, is from 2018. It's only been a
2 couple years. So part of it's also learning and
3 monitoring and seeing with some of those things from the
4 amendment as well.

5 I'm sure that didn't give you the answer you were
6 looking for, but hopefully it gives you an idea that my
7 thinking is trying to work through it kind of step by
8 step, but taking all of the complexities into account.
9 That's just the challenge that, of course, we have, no
10 different than you have or Pete or Zach or Jocelyn or
11 anybody else on the call from that standpoint; just trying
12 to get a feel from the different perspectives. And then
13 we have laws and regulations, and you guys know not all of
14 our laws that we're mandated to execute as part of the
15 federal government executive branch -- some of them
16 contradict themselves, and how do you work through that as
17 well? So hopefully that helps at least a little bit.

18 MS. RICE: well, I know you can't give a hard and
19 fast answer because this is all part of the process;
20 right? But thank you. I appreciate you sharing some more
21 of your thinking on that, Leanne, and appreciate knowing
22 that, you know, yes, you have the flexibility to go
23 farther than the amendment, and just would encourage you
24 to really think about the very unique role that the
25 Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest plays in terms of

1 actually achieving connectivity for grizzly bears and
2 other species.

3 MS. MARTEN: Yes. No, I appreciate it. Thanks,
4 Bonnie.

5 And I think, was it Al, Shawn?

6 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, exactly. We've got Al here
7 on the line. And then just a quick time check here.
8 We're coming up at 11:30, and maybe we have a little bit
9 of flexibility to capture any last thoughts or concerns
10 that people have. But let's hear from Al and then check
11 in with where we want to go, Leanne.

12 MS. MARTEN: Thanks.

13 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Okay. Thank you. Can you
14 hear me okay?

15 MS. MARTEN: I can hear you.

16 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Okay. Good. So a couple
17 things. You know, our restoration committee is focused
18 primarily in the Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, and
19 it's a very specific area with a lot of focus. And so the
20 discussion about standards and guidelines has been good,
21 and I suspect you might have to repeat, in a paraphrase
22 fashion, that in most every one of your sessions because
23 you'll have new people on.

24 But, you know, a lot of our interest is specific in
25 that area. And so we look at the guidelines as they're

1 written, and for a very special area and important area
2 like that is, the guidelines have lost their specificity
3 to the Elkhorns. They've dropped off some of the stuff
4 that's important to focus on the Elkhorns and brought in
5 the more general focus, specifically the wildlife
6 guidelines and standards. And so that was part of our
7 issue, is that's been left off. And we'll talk more about
8 it when we get into the wildlife and some of the other
9 ones.

10 But the discussion of standards, when you talk about
11 the importance of some of these areas, the standard brings
12 it up higher and makes it more focused to that specific
13 area rather than bringing in the general guidelines. And
14 in a lot of cases, it's only adding a few words into them,
15 making them a standard, that brings the profile of this
16 whole special area, the Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit,
17 up and allows folks, not only you as the Agency but all of
18 us as users and supporters and collaborators to be able to
19 make that a more important story to tell and not just the
20 landscape out in the general forest.

21 The other thing is there was discussion about risk
22 assessments, and so this may be more general than
23 specific; in that case, sheep. But I think any time that
24 the Forest talks about making a risk assessment or
25 following up with monitoring, the plan needs to put either

1 into an appendix or someplace an example or what the
2 current standard for that risk assessment might be and/or
3 an outline of what the monitoring plan might be.

4 There's just not anything really good about monitoring
5 in here. We pushed and pushed and pushed to try and get
6 vegetation monitoring and all these things in there. It
7 creates that gap of public support by not having that
8 stuff, because then we've got no way to go back and say,
9 look, this is what, at least at one point, we said was
10 good or we agreed to or you said this is what you're doing
11 and we said okay, without those kind of things being in
12 there someplace.

13 I think it's important that we try and figure out
14 where it is we put them and how we put them. And I
15 understand that we don't want to put them in a place where
16 you have to amend the plan to change them. They're a
17 fluid thing. They change with science over time, almost
18 weekly. But I think the public needs to have that to fall
19 back to. So I'll leave that with you.

20 MS. MARTEN: That's great input. Thank you, Al.
21 And I appreciate, you know, when we say "risk assessment,"
22 what are we even talking about? I can say it and have one
23 thing in mind, monitoring the same thing, but that doesn't
24 mean -- you or everybody on this call may have something
25 else they're thinking about when we use that terminology.

1 So great input. Great input. And yeah, we'll
2 definitely have more time to talk about the Elkhorns and
3 some of those special areas in the agenda. So I look
4 forward to that discussion as well on that.

5 Shawn, did we have anybody else's hand up?

6 MR. JOHNSON: I don't see any other hands here
7 among the interested parties and objection folks. We do
8 have a hand up from one of the members of the public.
9 We're trying to do some technical problem solving for
10 someone else. But I don't see any other hands up, but
11 maybe a last call for hands.

12 MS. MARTEN: Yep. If there is anything else?

13 Otherwise, let me -- First of all, I want to honor
14 everybody's time, because you guys are taking time out of
15 your busy days and schedules to participate, and so just
16 another big thank you. This has been extremely helpful
17 for me.

18 I mentioned that I'm not taking notes, but I have a
19 lot of folks taking notes for me. So if you aren't seeing
20 me writing things down via screen, it's not because it's
21 just going in one ear and out the other. I have folks
22 I've asked to take notes on my behalf. It helps me with
23 the dialogue and be an active listener.

24 This has given me a lot to think about. As I stated
25 at the beginning, you're not going to get set decisions

1 from me. That will be coming down the road later this
2 fall as we work through all the objections, not only over
3 the next three days but all the objections that came in.
4 And for many of you, I know you're very involved with the
5 Custer Gallatin forest plan revision as well, and so, you
6 know, we're being very purposeful about -- There are some
7 areas that we understand, some of you brought it up, where
8 there is a little bit of overlap. We're trying to honor
9 that where it makes sense as well.

10 So more to come later this fall. When my letter goes
11 to Forest Supervisor Avey, it becomes public. You guys
12 will see all of that. And we will notify you when it is
13 published on the web. So you'll be able to see, and you
14 will see some reference back to our dialogues and
15 different things like that as well. So more to come and
16 stayed tuned.

17 Meanwhile, thank you very much. For those of you that
18 are going to be participating later today -- Shawn, help
19 me out on the break and when they need to come back on, if
20 you would. And you may be popping in and out over the
21 next couple days or this may have been it. But thank you
22 for this morning, and we will just keep on moving, but
23 we'll take a break I think for lunch for folks now.

24 Shawn, I'm going to turn it back over to you to help
25 us with the next steps in the logistics there.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, the timing.

2 Just another word of thanks to all of you for working
3 through the technology here -- this seemed to work
4 pretty well -- and Leanne for guiding us through the
5 conversation.

6 We are going to break now from 11:30 until 1 o'clock.
7 At 1 o'clock, we'll come back and turn to identification
8 of species of conservation concern. We heard some
9 reference about that earlier today. Christine Dawe will
10 join us for that. So that will be from 1:00 to 2:00. And
11 then from 2:00 to 3:00, we'll turn to Elk Habitat. And
12 then at 3 o'clock, we'll have a summary of the day. So
13 that's the roadmap for the rest of the time.

14 You're welcome to stay on if you'd like to leave the
15 Zoom meeting open; just put your video and audio on mute.
16 Or just jump back on the link if you're coming back later
17 this afternoon. I think that's it, unless there are any
18 questions.

19 MS. RICE: Thank you.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, guys.

21 MR. NELSON: Thank you, everyone.

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1 IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN
2 Tuesday, September 29, 2020, 1:00 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.

3
4 A P P E A R A N C E S

5 FACILITATOR: Shawn Johnson, University of Montana

6 FOREST SERVICE:

7 CHRISTINE DAWE, Reviewing officer
8 LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester
9 SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor
10 DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader
11 LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist
12 SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds
13 WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist
14 AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist
15 KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds
16 ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses
17 LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor
18 JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff
19 CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist
20 TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner
21 CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

22 OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

23 PETE NELSON, Defenders of wildlife
24 JOCELYN LEROUX, Western Watersheds Project
25 MATTHEW BISHOP, Helena Hunters and Anglers
TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council

1 MR. JOHNSON: welcome, everybody. My name is
2 Shawn Johnson, and I'm with the University of Montana, and
3 I'm glad to be helping the Helena-Lewis and Clark National
4 Forest and the regional forester with today's meeting and
5 glad to have everyone's participation here in this
6 objection meeting.

7 Just a couple of things in the chat box here as we get
8 started. If possible, it would be great to have folks
9 rename themselves if you're online and joining via Zoom.
10 And you can rename yourself with your first name, last
11 name, and organization by hovering over your box, clicking
12 on the three -- the blue field with the three dots, and
13 renaming yourself.

14 Also, for the members of the press who may be joining
15 us today, I did include contact here for one of the public
16 affairs specialists from the region, so you can contact
17 Chiara at either her e-mail address or the phone number
18 provided here.

19 And then if folks need technical assistance during the
20 meeting, please contact either Cody Hutchinson or
21 Timory Peel, and their contact information is provided as
22 well. I want to thank them for their help in the meeting
23 this morning and apologize to Andy for any
24 miscommunication there. I know Timory and Andy had the
25 opportunity to connect and work through some challenges

1 there with the -- probably a lack of clarity on my part in
2 terms of who is on the screen and not. So apologies,
3 Andy, and look forward to having you be involved
4 throughout this objection meeting period.

5 Just as we get started back up here, it worked really
6 well this morning, so I want to thank everyone for how
7 much attention you're providing to this and how much time
8 you've carved out for this conversation. As we continue,
9 let's continue to exhibit the same kind of behavior and
10 provide each other with the same kind of latitude and
11 patience as we deal with the technology and really try to
12 listen to understand each other.

13 So just to reflect on those ground rules. You know,
14 we're really trying to seek understanding and clarity
15 today and ask key questions and really see if we can
16 explore some potential opportunities to resolve some of
17 the concerns out there. So let's continue to really
18 listen to and respect one another.

19 One thing that came up a few times was just the need
20 to speak really clearly and slowly. Part of that's a
21 technology issue, part of that's a microphone sensitivity
22 issue. Some of us have better equipment than others. And
23 because we do have a court reporter here capturing the
24 narrative, it's really important that we speak as clearly
25 and slowly as possible. It's also helpful to have people

1 introduce yourselves as you talk as well.

2 A reminder that there is closed captioning available,
3 if that is a feature that would help keep you engaged and
4 following and be able to hear the conversation or follow
5 the conversation more closely. And thanks, Timory, for
6 dropping the link again in the chat box to that. So if
7 you click on that link, that will open a new field. You
8 simply hit Continue and that field opens up and the closed
9 captioning fields will be available to you.

10 So this morning we had a good conversation around
11 wildlife diversity, connectivity, and ESA species issues.
12 At 1 o'clock, now, we're turning to identification of
13 species of conservation concern. And as Leanne mentioned,
14 we'll also be joined during this session by
15 Christine Dawe, so we'll welcome her in a second.

16 At this point, I'd invite those who are either
17 objectors or interested parties for this topic to go ahead
18 and turn on your camera and join this conversation. I'd
19 also invite Leanne and Christine and Sara to join us as
20 well.

21 So I'd like to start just by having those folks
22 introduce yourselves who will be part of the conversation,
23 and then I'll turn it over to Leanne for some introductory
24 remarks, and then over to Christine.

25 Just another trick for those who are watching online

1 and are seeing a whole bunch of boxes, you can hide the
2 folks who are not on video from your screen and only
3 highlight those that are on video, so that is an
4 opportunity if you want to go ahead and select that.

5 All right. So I think we've got everyone here who is
6 going to join us, so let's go ahead and jump in. And
7 let's start with Pete Nelson.

8 MR. NELSON: Good afternoon. This is
9 Pete Nelson, director of the federal lands program with
10 the Defenders of wildlife.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Pete.
12 Jocelyn.

13 MS. LEROUX: Jocelyn Leroux, the Washington and
14 Montana director with Western Watersheds Project.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Jocelyn.
16 Matthew.

17 MR. BISHOP: Hi. Matthew Bishop. I'm a staff
18 attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center in
19 Helena, Montana, and I'm here on behalf of Helena Hunters
20 and Anglers.

21 MR. JOHNSON: All right. I think that's everyone
22 for this one. Did I miss anyone?

23 Okay. Well, I'll turn it over to you, then, Leanne.

24 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Shawn.

25 And welcome back, everyone. I know Jocelyn, Pete, and

1 Matthew were all with us this morning. And it's great to
2 see you, Christine. Thanks for joining.

3 Real quick before I turn it over to Christine, for
4 those of you that may be listening in, just a little bit
5 on where we're at in the agenda and the role I am in for
6 this subject and the role Christine Dawe is in. So I
7 mentioned earlier this morning that we had a little over
8 150 objectors to the Helena-Lewis and Clark forest plan
9 and a little over 120 or so actually unique objected
10 issues.

11 One of those was some objections to the species of
12 conservation concern list. And per the 2012 planning
13 rule, the species of conservation concern list is actually
14 a regional forester recommendation versus a forest
15 supervisor. So I don't review my own recommendations,
16 obviously, so that's where we have Acting Associate Deputy
17 Chief of National Forest System Christine Dawe, who is the
18 reviewing officer of the species of conservation concern
19 list and whether or not we have a species on that list or
20 not. So that's why Christine is here. She's in the
21 reviewing officer role for this particular part of the
22 objection process.

23 And I am going to turn it over to her to help
24 facilitate and walk through this with our objectors and
25 interested parties at this time, but I will stay on the

1 screen, along with Sara Mayben from the Helena-Lewis and
2 Clark, to listen and learn.

3 So Christine, I'll go ahead and turn it over to you
4 and we'll go from there.

5 MS. DAWE: Thank you, Leanne.

6 Good afternoon, everybody. Nice to see everyone. As
7 Leanne mentioned, I'm the reviewing official for the
8 species of conservation concern identification for the
9 Helena-Lewis and Clark. It's nice to be here today.

10 So I just want to talk a little bit about -- put some
11 context to my role here and make sure that everyone
12 understands that my goal is focused on a very narrow area.
13 It is strictly focused on the identification of species of
14 conservation concern and not on any of the other
15 associated plan components or anything that may have been
16 discussed earlier or will be later in the resolution
17 process. So I just want to make sure that everybody is
18 clear on that, that we're strictly going to focus, for my
19 purposes, on the identification of the species of
20 conservation concern.

21 Does anybody have any questions about that? Okay.
22 And I don't think any of you guys are new to this rodeo,
23 so you probably know the ropes of how this goes.

24 So we had two objections on the species of
25 conservation concern list. And if I'm correct, we've got

1 Pete Nelson from Defenders of wildlife on; correct? Hi,
2 Pete.

3 And Jocelyn from Western Watersheds, who is
4 representing also Alliance for the Wild Rockies and
5 WildEarth Guardians. Is that correct, Jocelyn? Okay.
6 Great.

7 And then Matthew, are you an interested party on this
8 topic?

9 MR. BISHOP: Yeah, I'm just an interested party.
10 We didn't raise an issue.

11 MS. DAWE: Okay. Great. And Tom Partin, same
12 for you; is that correct? I see your box, Tom. Maybe
13 you're not --

14 MR. PARTIN: Yes. That's right. Sorry. I was
15 muted. It takes me a while to get to the right button.

16 MS. DAWE: Okay. Thanks, Tom. Appreciate it.
17 So that's helpful.

18 So let's get started here. There were three primary
19 issues that came up in the objections from the two
20 objectors. And so I will just list them out, and then
21 we'll go through and have a conversation in a little more
22 detail on sort of my understanding of each one of those
23 objections, and then we'll have conversation with the
24 objectors around those issues. And also, just to be
25 clear, I am not making any decisions today. You probably

1 heard that from Leanne as well on other issues, that this
2 is our opportunity to really listen and ask questions and
3 get clarifications on the objections that you submitted.

4 So the three issues, the three primary issues, as I
5 understand them -- And I want to thank the team who worked
6 on doing the review and helping me get prepared and
7 providing me with all the materials. I have read through
8 the objections, as well as all the materials that were
9 provided to me for this conversation. So the three issues
10 we have are, one, insufficient rationale for not
11 designating some certain species as SCCs. And so there
12 were a number of species where this was raised up, that
13 the objector felt that we didn't provide sufficient
14 information for not listing a particular species. So
15 that's one of the overall objections that was raised.

16 The second is failure to consider broadscale threats
17 that are stemming from outside the plan area that may
18 affect persistence of a species within the plan area.

19 Did I capture that right, Pete?

20 MR. NELSON: Yes, you did. Nice work.

21 MS. DAWE: And specifically related to those
22 broadscale threats and how they're related to determining
23 substantial concern for a species in the planning unit.

24 And then the third primary point was about
25 two specific species, which was an objection that we

1 should have listed wolverine and bighorn sheep as species
2 of conservation concern.

3 So those were the three, the three primary areas that
4 came in from the two objection processes. And so we'll
5 start with the first one and we'll go from there, and then
6 we'll open up for conversation.

7 So back to the first issue, the insufficient rationale
8 for not designating a specific species as an SCC, there
9 were a number of cases and a number of species that were
10 raised in the objections.

11 And Pete, I think this is mostly coming from
12 Defenders' objection, where you didn't feel that we
13 provided sufficient rationale for the conclusion that we
14 wouldn't put a particular species on the -- identify them
15 as an SCC. Did I capture that correctly? Is there
16 anything you want to -- anything I need to know more about
17 this than what is in your objection letter? Because you
18 didn't put forward any particular remedies. And I know
19 you've raised similar issues on the Flathead plan, and
20 I've got some background on that as well. So anything
21 else that I need to be aware of? Please educate me.

22 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Christine. It's great to
23 see you. I would say, you know, that those first
24 two issues are actually very closely related. If I could
25 summarize our argument, and this is an argument that we've

1 been making, you're correct, in other locations; Flathead,
2 but not only the Flathead. The other forest plans come to
3 mind, and this has been kind of a longstanding policy
4 issue as it relates to identification of SCCs.

5 we've put forward a lot of policy information to the
6 Agency on what we consider to be the appropriate and
7 proper decisionmaking process to be applied in these
8 cases. And, you know, there's been clarifying information
9 put out by the Agency on this issue as well in several
10 memorandum from several years ago really regarding
11 external threats or threats that are relevant to the
12 planning area and how you deal with those based on making
13 a determination regarding persistence in the plan area.

14 I will note that this is a complicated area of policy,
15 because we're dealing with ecological scale as well as
16 administrative scales when making determinations about
17 concern based on best available scientific information.
18 The way that we do it is that if there's existing
19 information out there indicating concerns -- And we'll
20 often use the NatureServe ranking system as our starting
21 place to say, okay, there's been an establishment of
22 concern range-wide for these at-risk species. And then
23 that leads to a logic that says, okay, best available
24 science has already established a range-wide concern, and
25 now there's this obligation that the Agency has to

1 demonstrate that that concern that's already been
2 established range-wide, for example, some of these S2s,
3 S3s, is not present in the planning area.

4 I mean, we abide by an ecological principle that
5 simply says if a species is at risk across its range, it
6 is at risk wherever it is found. It cannot be determined
7 to be secure in a planning area while it has already been
8 determined by best available science and experts in
9 institutions such as NatureServe as being of concern
10 across its range. It leads to a logical problem for us.
11 And therefore, as a policy matter, we are looking for the
12 Agency to essentially demonstrate security in the planning
13 area and an absence of concern given that information that
14 already exists regarding a species' likelihood of
15 persistence.

16 And so I think in this case, we went through species
17 by species, Christine, and we essentially made that
18 argument numerous times with several different wrinkles
19 involved, I suppose. And I can go through those
20 specifically, but I wanted to put forward kind of the,
21 really the thrust of our argument. And what we are
22 seeking is just a more clear response from the Agency
23 given where we're starting with those species concerns
24 based on those NatureServe rankings. Which NatureServe is
25 not saying that those species are secure; they're saying

1 that there's concern. And therefore, we think that that
2 should be the default setting unless there can be some
3 information that clearly, with a clear rationale, rebuts
4 the information that's already being presented via
5 NatureServe and other best available science information.

6 I'll stop there because that's a lot. But that's
7 essentially the gist of the argument.

8 MS. DAWE: So let me ask you a question, Pete.
9 If I'm understanding you correctly, you're saying that,
10 for instance, NatureServe has already determined there's
11 concern for species and they've listed them, ranked them
12 in a certain way, and they've identified whatever those
13 factors are that led them to give it that ranking that
14 there's concern in that species.

15 That no matter if those conditions don't exist in the
16 planning area, you think we should default to listing that
17 as SCC, even though, for instance, if it's -- I don't
18 know. Let's say it's a habitat-related issue, but there
19 is plenty of habitat in the plan area and, for that
20 reason, we're not concerned about it in the plan area. Is
21 there a space for the Agency, you know, to be able to show
22 that despite a NatureServe ranking that exhibits some
23 concern, that that concern may not exist in the plan area,
24 or is the expectation that we would always default to say
25 whatever NatureServe --

1 MR. NELSON: I hear what you're saying. So
2 you're saying is it feasible from Defenders' perspective
3 to come to a conclusion that the threats that are driving
4 the broader concern determination by another party, in
5 this case NatureServe, are not present in the planning
6 area? Yeah, I do think that that's a feasible outcome
7 that would be specific to the facts associated with any
8 given species.

9 And we could go through those or we could go through
10 that in an additional process. We'd be very happy to do
11 that with your team. Because I think it warrants looking
12 at the facts in each case; right? They vary. But as a
13 general matter, we're seeing this pattern I guess come
14 forward.

15 And it's not just providing a clear rationale on why
16 the driving threats are not manifesting themselves in the
17 planning area. The Forest Service also argues in one case
18 that there's insufficient information in the case of the
19 northern bog lemming. But there was sufficient
20 information for NatureServe to make a determination. And
21 so in that case, the Agency is saying, well, yes, true,
22 but there's not sufficient information in the planning
23 area to actually carry forward that essentially
24 recommendation that NatureServe is making given the
25 conservation status of that species.

1 So I think what I'm saying, Christine, is for us, the
2 decisionmaking process defaults in, and then there's a
3 high bar, a bar that the Agency then meets to filter those
4 species out based on that rationale and that information.
5 A lot of SCC decisionmaking is really about transparency
6 and documentation of rationale; right?

7 Because I'm not saying that these species are
8 definitively, in every case, insecure in the planning
9 area. I'm just saying the Forest Service has an
10 obligation -- And it's a public interest issue. The
11 public wants to be able to see that trail in terms of how
12 that filter works when you're excluding a species that
13 look like they already have a stamp of concern on them
14 from another institution. In some cases, the regional
15 forester's sensitive species where there's already been a
16 previous determination of range-wide viability concern
17 again being filtered out at the unit level.

18 And so, you know, Christine, I think we've talked
19 about this policy issue over the years.

20 MS. DAWE: We have.

21 MR. NELSON: I think the solution for me is, you
22 know, make sure that those rationales are really clear and
23 easy to understand so the reader follows the Agency and
24 comes to the same conclusion regarding plan level
25 security.

1 MS. DAWE: So I think that's kind of the big
2 point here you want to make, is that you're not seeing --
3 in the instances you've objected to, you're not seeing
4 that we've provided the rationale or connected the dots to
5 support not identifying it as an SCC.

6 MR. NELSON: Based on the information that we
7 have, which is the starting point information, on those
8 designations from NatureServe which are already
9 establishing concern.

10 MS. DAWE: Right.

11 MR. NELSON: So yeah, I think it's a rebuttal
12 point, that the Agency then has this obligation to rebut
13 and respond to that information and allow the reader to
14 come with you to a determination of security.

15 MS. DAWE: Okay. I appreciate that. That's
16 helpful.

17 So a question for you back on the -- Because you're
18 right, we're talking about both of these issues, which
19 they're connected, which is fine. We can do that. But
20 you talked about the insufficient information piece, and
21 so, you know, we have this dynamic where -- I know you
22 know the planning directors probably almost better than
23 anybody. You could probably cite them back to me better
24 than I can cite them to you.

25 MR. NELSON: Maybe.

1 MS. DAWE: You know that we have -- in the
2 directives, it says that if there is insufficient
3 information to make a determination, it can't be listed as
4 an SCC. But you're saying that if NatureServe has already
5 expressed concern, there must be sufficient information
6 somewhere.

7 MR. NELSON: Yeah.

8 MS. DAWE: However, the criteria are different,
9 and we have a whole series of criteria that we have to
10 look at to identify SCCs that don't necessarily mirror
11 NatureServe. So that's not -- so I'm curious about your
12 thoughts about that piece.

13 MR. NELSON: Yeah, I agree with that. I mean,
14 like I said at the outset, NatureServe is making
15 ecological-based determinations, a species range as being
16 a unit of analysis. Once you get into the abstract notion
17 of a planning area population, there are difficulties in
18 translating the ecological information that NatureServe is
19 providing and fitting that into the SCC decisionmaking
20 process. I do acknowledge that, and so I understand.

21 I think the route here for me, and I've been a big
22 proponent of this since we had the Federal Advisory
23 Committee on Forest Planning, is to really collaborate and
24 to really work closely through these determination
25 processes so that there's a high degree of confidence in

1 them at the end of the day. And I know your staff has
2 been working tirelessly on this and, honestly, I believe
3 making decisions that they deem appropriate in their
4 professional judgment, and I respect that. It's just the
5 fact that we're looking at the information that we have
6 and looking at the filtration of that information that
7 leads to these conclusions.

8 MS. DAWE: Right.

9 MR. NELSON: So it's not easy, but I do think it
10 is doable. On the Francis Marion, which was the forest I
11 was trying to remember because of the first --

12 MS. DAWE: That was a while ago.

13 MR. NELSON: -- decision under the 12 rule, you
14 know, Defenders was the only objector on that forest in
15 South Carolina. And I went to South Carolina for that
16 meeting with Chris French, and we had a good discussion on
17 this issue. And we had a good resolution, where there was
18 a process agreed to for the parties, you know, to work
19 through some of the outstanding questions that remained on
20 how the rationale and the application of the filters was
21 playing out, and I found that to be a very productive
22 exercise in that case.

23 MS. DAWE: Okay. Thanks, Pete. I appreciate
24 that.

25 There's one specific species I did want to talk about

1 that I believe was in your objection related to the arctic
2 grayling.

3 MR. NELSON: Oh, yes.

4 MS. DAWE: And I know that you're aware of sort
5 of the ping-pong game that's been going on there with
6 whether or not it's proposed or going to be listed or a
7 candidate, et cetera. And recent information I think that
8 came out in July indicated that it was not going to be
9 listed; right? So I just want to acknowledge that I think
10 the Agency recognizes that, you know, you know that if
11 it's a candidate proposed or listed it's not an SCC.

12 MR. NELSON: Right.

13 MS. DAWE: If it's not going to be covered under
14 ESA, then, you know, obviously, the Agency will evaluate
15 species that we believe there may be concern about. So I
16 just wanted to acknowledge that, because that one is a
17 little bit different situation than some of the other
18 species you guys objected on.

19 MR. NELSON: Okay. Thank you for that. Does
20 that mean that you are going to be readdressing the
21 grayling in the next round of process on this?

22 MS. DAWE: No, I'm not going to make any
23 decisions here, but just wanted to acknowledge that we
24 recognize there's a change in status because of what's
25 been going on with the ESA listing process.

1 MR. NELSON: I mean, as a policy matter, I think
2 this is really important to address, and it sounds like
3 that will be discussed here with regard to wolverine,
4 bighorns perhaps. In the case of the ESA listing status,
5 you know, it can cause problems for the Agency when you're
6 waiting for other institutions to determine what the legal
7 status of a species is. I mean, in my opinion, it's wise
8 to treat those species as if they were SCCs, because
9 otherwise it causes all kinds of policy problems when you
10 do see changes in legal conservation status. I think that
11 would improve the process.

12 And as a substantive policy matter, I think that the
13 viability rules in the planning rule apply equally to
14 candidates and listed species, so you can always be safe
15 to plan and meet viability requirements regardless of the
16 legal administrative conservation status of a species.
17 Wolverine is one that we've really kind of been bounced
18 around a lot on in this region, and I think there probably
19 are some ways to handle that a little bit better. But
20 I'll leave that to the other objectors to discuss.

21 MS. DAWE: Yeah. I just want to remind folks too
22 that the deputy chief recently issued a letter to the
23 field to clarify that, you know, SCC -- the identification
24 of SCC was never intended to be kind of done once. The
25 unit and the region, the regional forester always has the

1 opportunity, if there's new information or changed
2 circumstances, to reevaluate and consider new, you know,
3 species that she might want to identify. And so I just
4 remind folks that this isn't tied just to plan revision or
5 plan. There are opportunities to be responsive to changed
6 circumstances whenever it might be warranted. So just
7 remember that that's an option as well.

8 MR. NELSON: Yeah, Christine, I'm glad you raised
9 that. On the Francis Marion, as part of that resolution
10 on that objection, a species were added; and then we went
11 through a process of using the planning directives to
12 determine whether the plan components that were already in
13 place in the plan were sufficient to meet the needs of
14 those added species that were added post objection.

15 MS. DAWE: Right.

16 MR. NELSON: And that process actually worked
17 pretty well as spelled out in the directives. But it only
18 works I think -- well, it works better when you have plan
19 components that are in place to provide for the viability
20 of some of those species that you think you might be
21 picking up and adding; right?

22 MS. DAWE: Right.

23 MR. NELSON: So in the case of wolverine, you
24 would want to make sure that you're meeting your viability
25 based on requirements so that you could make an addition

1 without then having to amend the plan accordingly to maybe
2 meet regulatory requirements. So anyways, there you go.
3 Maybe that helps you.

4 MS. DAWE: Yeah. No, that's helpful. I
5 appreciate that. I wasn't thinking about the
6 Francis Marion because it was a while back, but it's
7 helpful to remind us what went on there.

8 MR. NELSON: Sure.

9 MS. DAWE: So we're about halfway through, so I'm
10 going to switch topics here and we're going to go on to
11 the wolverine and bighorn sheep.

12 So Jocelyn, my understanding is your proposed remedy
13 is that we identify both those species as SCCs, so I want
14 to just open it up to you and give you the same
15 opportunity I gave Pete. Is there additional information
16 you want to share that I need to be aware of, before we
17 get into a conversation, that wasn't in your objection?

18 MS. LEROUX: Nothing additional to start. I'll
19 just echo what Pete just finished off saying, talking
20 about the wolverine, how it is important to kind of have
21 those policies and plan components in place for those
22 species that may not get federal ESA status but then still
23 definitely require certain specific management activities
24 in order to make sure that that species persists on the
25 forest.

1 MS. DAWE: And thanks. I appreciate that, having
2 some history in Region 1 and having been part of the sort
3 of changing situation with wolverine as it's kind of
4 bounced back and forth. And I think the region has done a
5 fair amount of information gathering and understanding
6 because of the uncertainty around what was going to happen
7 with wolverine. So we'll definitely talk to the region
8 about, you know, what kind of information, and then HLC in
9 particular. I'm sure they've done a lot of thinking
10 around this because of the uncertainty related to it. But
11 again, as of right now, you know, wolverine has gone
12 through this proposed rule thing, so the Forest has not
13 identified it as an SCC, appropriately I think, but
14 recognizing that that can change.

15 Anything additional about wolverine before we jump
16 over to bighorn sheep?

17 MS. LEROUX: No. Not from me.

18 MS. DAWE: All right. Great. So let's talk
19 about bighorn sheep. It's a little bit different
20 situation. Not listed species. And I know that there is
21 a lot of interest around bighorn sheep, so Jocelyn, I'll
22 open it up to you to share anything additional that you
23 think is important for the conversation around bighorn
24 sheep.

25 MS. LEROUX: That's actually one of the

1 three primary issues that you pointed out from both of our
2 objections. The failure to consider broadscale threats
3 definitely applies to bighorn sheep. As we stated in our
4 objection, the consideration of private lands and BLM
5 nearby was not strong enough in the forest plan, we
6 believe, to protect bighorn sheep populations or potential
7 future bighorn sheep populations. As there's not that
8 many on the forest right now, but there is plenty of
9 habitat that could be occupied, then the assessment needs
10 to be extended into different -- across jurisdictional
11 boundaries or agency boundaries.

12 MS. DAWE: Jocelyn, do you have thoughts about --
13 You said you think sort of what's provided isn't adequate.
14 What would you consider to be adequate in terms of your
15 concerns about bighorn sheep?

16 MS. LEROUX: So we listed in our objection
17 several things there that relate both to forest management
18 activities that would open up the forest canopy to provide
19 for better movement of bighorn sheep. If that is not
20 assessed across different agencies or public-private
21 boundaries, then it could definitely lead to contact with
22 domestic sheep were an adequate assessment for the
23 permeability of the landscape not undertaken. And so
24 working with those different agencies and private
25 landholders, there definitely needs to be a little bit

1 more of that assessment available.

2 MS. DAWE: Okay. Anything else?

3 MS. LEROUX: No. Not on that specific topic.

4 MS. DAWE: Pete, do you have anything you want to
5 add on either the bighorn sheep or wolverine issues?

6 MR. NELSON: I don't, Christine.

7 MS. DAWE: Okay. Tom Partin, as an interested
8 person, I wanted to give you an opportunity to share any
9 viewpoints or comments you might have on that conversation
10 we just had.

11 MR. PARTIN: Well, most of our comments,
12 Christine, as you know, related to the timber aspects and
13 the ability to get in and manage the land in certain
14 areas, which we think would benefit habitat of a lot of
15 species. And looking at the forest and how many acres are
16 already set aside either in wilderness or in inventoried
17 roadless areas, you know, there's a lot of area, whether
18 it be corridors, whether it be base habitat, that is
19 accounted for.

20 And I'm a little confused on the argument on the
21 bighorn sheep, about opening up the stands and promoting
22 movement where that would interfere or jeopardize those
23 species possibly having more contact with the domestic
24 animals. So I guess I have a little bit more to learn on
25 that side of it, but that's kind of our concerns there.

1 MS. DAWE: Okay. Thanks, Tom. Appreciate it.

2 Matthew, anything from you that you'd like to add to
3 the conversation you've heard? Okay.

4 All right. Jocelyn, did you want to elaborate for Tom
5 or is that better left for -- is that too in the weeds?

6 MS. LEROUX: It might be a little bit too in the
7 weeds.

8 MS. DAWE: Okay. I just thought I'd check.

9 All right. I don't think I have any additional
10 questions. This has been helpful to, you know,
11 understand, Pete, a little bit more of the nuance and the
12 correlation between the insufficient information and the
13 broadscale threats. That was a helpful conversation for
14 me. And Jocelyn as well on your viewpoints on the bighorn
15 sheep. So thanks for offering. Thanks for that.

16 And so any last comments or anything before we close
17 out on this topic? I appreciate everybody's time and
18 attention.

19 MR. PARTIN: Well, Christine, just one other
20 topic on how you handle these species of concern before
21 they become listed and sounding like almost you have to
22 provide the habitat to all the species of concern to
23 prevent you getting into more trouble down the road, which
24 that just doesn't seem to make sense to me. If you're
25 managing appropriately at the time and doing what you're

1 doing as far as for forest health and for other species,
2 it would seem like what we're asking in that respect is
3 that you go ahead and treat the species as it's already
4 listed. And I don't think that's the responsibility of
5 the Forest Service at this time. You know, I don't know
6 all the rules and regulations, but it seems like it's a
7 little bit of an overreach, from our perspective.

8 MS. DAWE: Okay. Thanks, Tom. Appreciate that.

9 All right. Well, thank you, everyone, for the
10 conversation today. I very much appreciate it. And I am
11 going to turn it back over to Shawn or Leanne, whichever
12 one of you wants to take it here.

13 MR. JOHNSON: I'll jump in and say thank you,
14 Christine, for facilitating that conversation and being so
15 prepared to engage with the folks on Zoom here today.
16 That was a really helpful conversation.

17 I did see Pete's hand come up there at the end.

18 Pete, was there anything else you wanted to share?

19 MR. NELSON: I was just going to say thank you to
20 Christine for the conversation.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Oh. Okay.

22 MR. NELSON: We look forward to the next round of
23 conversations, Christine.

24 MS. DAWE: Good to see you, Pete.

25 MR. JOHNSON: And then I did just want to offer

1 Leanne or Sara the opportunity to say anything additional
2 that may have come up from your perspective.

3 No? Okay.

4 Leanne?

5 MS. MARTEN: No. Just thank you, Jocelyn and
6 Pete and Matthew. Good to see you also, Tom. Very
7 helpful. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

8 Thank you, Christine, for taking the time out of your
9 day and participating as the reviewing officer on this
10 part.

11 MS. DAWE: Always fun.

12 MR. JOHNSON: well, very good. And good use of
13 time as well, which I always appreciate staying on time
14 here, even a little bit ahead of schedule. We do not want
15 to jump into the next topic, which is elk habitat
16 management, until 2 o'clock, and so people are welcome to
17 stay on the line by just muting their video and their
18 audio and then jumping back on at 2 o'clock.

19 We will reconvene at 2:00 and take up the topic of elk
20 habitat management. So we'll see you all at 2:00.

21 * * * * *

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1 ELK HABITAT MANAGEMENT

2 Tuesday, September 29, 2020, 2:00 p.m. - 3:17 p.m.

3

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A P P E A R A N C E S

5

FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

6

FOREST SERVICE:

7

LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer

SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor

8

DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader

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9

SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds

WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist

10

AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist

KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds

11

ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses

LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor

12

JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff

CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist

13

TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner

CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

14

15

OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PARTIES:

16

GAYLE JOSLIN, Helena Hunters and Anglers

TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council

17

AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.

ERIC CLEWIS, Montana Wildlife Federation

18

DEB O'NEILL, Montana Fish, wildlife & Parks

ADAM GROVE, Montana Fish, wildlife & Parks

19

MATTHEW BISHOP, Helena Hunters and Anglers

JEFF BRADLEY, Montana Bicycle Guild

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1 MR. JOHNSON: We've got some new folks joining us
2 as well, so welcome to anyone who is just joining us here
3 at 2 o'clock. I am putting in the chat box a little bit
4 of information. And this is old hat for some of you, but
5 new information for those just joining. We would like
6 everyone to go ahead and rename themselves, if you haven't
7 already, in the Zoom box by clicking on the little three
8 dots in the upper right-hand corner. Please go ahead and
9 click that and rename yourself with your first name, your
10 last name, and your organizational affiliation.

11 For any members of the press that may be joining us,
12 we'd ask you to get in touch with Chiara, and her contact
13 information is in the chat box as well.

14 If you have any technical assistance issues or
15 challenges with the audio or visual, please let us know by
16 getting in touch with either Cody or Timory using the
17 contact information provided. And finally, there's a link
18 to closed captioning for whom that might be a helpful
19 service this afternoon.

20 So far, I've been really impressed with how things are
21 going. This is a strange time, for sure, but being able
22 to use virtual tools like Zoom to stay connected and to
23 continue the conversation is really a terrific opportunity
24 and option for us. So thanks, everyone, for jumping on
25 today and being a part of the conversation.

1 As we move to our topic, which is elk habitat
2 management, we'll be using a similar format as before.
3 So I'll invite, as soon as folks are ready, those who are
4 objectors or interested parties, go ahead and turn your
5 video screens on so that we can see you. In just a
6 second, I'll have you introduce yourselves. Following
7 that, I'll turn it over to Leanne Marten, the regional
8 forester, for a brief review of the issue and her
9 understanding of some of the key challenges and questions
10 that she has for everyone.

11 As before, just a couple of ground rules. We're here
12 to really seek clarity on the issues, and so our intent
13 and focus today is on really listening to one another and
14 asking good questions and looking for opportunity to fully
15 understand what's at play here, what the key issues are,
16 and, where possible, start to explore some potential
17 remedies.

18 In order that everyone can really hear and understand
19 each other, and to help our transcriptionist, we ask that
20 you speak better than I -- more clearly than I am right
21 now. Speak slowly and clearly. And when you're
22 introducing yourself for the first time in particular,
23 please state your name and your affiliation.

24 So let's jump in with our introductions. I'm just
25 going to go from my screen. And if you would also

1 identify if you're an interested party or an objector,
2 that would be helpful.

3 So Gayle, I'm going to start with you.

4 MS. JOSLIN: I'm Gayle Joslin, and I'm an
5 interested party and a member of Helena Hunters and
6 Anglers Association and just very interested in this
7 particular topic. And I do have some background in this
8 particular topic as well. So thank you for doing this.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Gayle.

10 Tom.

11 MR. PARTIN: Yeah, thank you. Tom Partin. I am
12 a consultant for the American Forest Resource Council.
13 Really interested in hearing the discussion on this issue.
14 We look at most of the projects on the Helena-Lewis and
15 Clark, as with most of the projects on all forests in
16 Montana, and elk is a big issue, elk cover and forage. So
17 happy to be engaged in the conversation. Thank you.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Tom.

19 Al.

20 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Al Christophersen, and I am
21 a cochair of what used to be the Elkhorn Restoration
22 Committee when we wrote the comments, now a cochair of the
23 Big Elk Divide Restoration Committee. We've been around
24 for about ten years, working primarily in the Elkhorns for
25 these comments.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Terrific. Thank you, Al.

2 Eric.

3 MR. CLEWIS: Hey, I'm Eric Clewis. I work for
4 the Montana Wildlife Federation.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Eric.

6 Deb.

7 MS. O'NEILL: Hi. I am Deb O'Neill. I'm a
8 policy specialist for Fish, wildlife & Parks. And also,
9 I'll let him introduce himself too, but Adam Grove is also
10 here with me here today as interested parties.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Deb.

12 Let's go ahead to Adam next, then.

13 Adam.

14 MR. GROVE: Adam Grove. I'm the area wildlife
15 biologist in Townsend. I've been there about the last
16 six years. Previously, 11 years as the biologist in
17 White Sulphur Springs, and one of the primary coauthors of
18 the 2013 U.S. Forest Service-FWP Eastside Elk Habitat
19 Recommendations.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Adam.

21 Matthew.

22 MR. BISHOP: Hi. I'm Matt Bishop. I'm an
23 attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center in
24 Helena, Montana, and I'm here on behalf of Helena Hunters
25 and Anglers. Thanks.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Matthew.

2 Jeff.

3 MR. BRADLEY: Hi. I'm Jeff Bradley. I think I
4 have my objection or interested party notification letter
5 as James, my first name. I'm a member of the Montana
6 Bicycle Guild. I'm here today as an interested party.

7 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thank you all.

8 Is there anyone else that's either an objector or an
9 interested party that I've missed?

10 Terrific. Thank you all for joining today.

11 Leanne, I'm going to turn it over to you.

12 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thank you.

13 And Sara, did you want to introduce yourself real
14 quick? I think everybody knows you, but just in case.

15 MS. MAYBEN: I'm Sara Mayben. I'm the deputy
16 forest supervisor for the Helena-Lewis and Clark, and I am
17 sitting in for Bill Avey, who is on a special fire
18 assignment and unavailable to attend. So I am here on his
19 behalf, but I'm here to help Leanne if she needs me.

20 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Sara.

21 And great to see everyone. I really appreciate you
22 joining here this afternoon. As we move into this topic,
23 I want to set a little bit of context. To a few of you,
24 this will be a repeat from this morning, but we have
25 people coming and going, including members of the public

1 that are listening in on topics of interest. So just to
2 add a little bit of context and how we got to where we're
3 at, and I'll narrow it down to this topic for the elk
4 habitat management.

5 we had over 150 objectors to the Helena-Lewis and
6 Clark proposed plan and draft record of decision and
7 around 120 or so unique objection issues. And so, as you
8 guys can imagine, there's been a lot of work that's been
9 going on reviewing all of your written objections and all
10 the interested persons letters on this.

11 And so we're not going to be able to get into every
12 complex nuance with even the elk habitat management today,
13 but what I'm really going to be looking for and helping
14 tease out is trying to see the issues through your eyes,
15 make sure I understand the context of it. And I've got
16 some questions on some of the proposed remedies.

17 You're not going to get a final decision from me.
18 It's really for me to absorb and to learn from you, have a
19 robust dialogue amongst ourselves and you amongst
20 yourselves as objectors to see how we can hopefully move
21 forward and learn from each other on this.

22 we have had a panel, a team from the forest, from Sara
23 and Bill's forest look through all the objections, we've
24 had a regional office team look through all the
25 objections, and we actually had a panel of personnel from

1 across the country who had not worked on this at all in
2 any way take a look and work through the objections to
3 help us bring together and have a real comprehensive look
4 at all the issues that you all brought forward, ranging
5 from a page to hundreds of pages. So I say that to let
6 you know that even if we don't get to a specific nuance of
7 your objection on this topic, it doesn't mean that we
8 aren't looking at that and that it's not important.

9 If I miss something, I'll give you the opportunity,
10 and by all means, make sure you bring it up today. I want
11 to make sure that what you feel is really pertinent to our
12 dialogue today is out on the table. I just can't cover
13 every aspect in the time we have. But I am reviewing your
14 objections and will take a look at all your various points
15 on this.

16 Elk habitat management, I'm going to state the
17 obvious, in the state of Montana is huge. It's
18 extremely -- Elk, I should say and elk habitat management,
19 the two, are very important to many people across the
20 state, to all of you. A lot of it is values, and there's
21 a lot of values that enter into it. So as we go through
22 today, some of you have heard me say this morning my
23 questions are in no way intended to imply that I'm trying
24 to ask you to change any values you or your organization
25 may have. It's simply just that, they're questions; it's

1 me trying to tease out an understanding to help me think
2 through things and to work on my response letter to
3 Forest Supervisor Avey on the objection process.

4 so I will apologize if it comes across like I'm trying
5 to alter or change your values. I just ask for a little
6 bit of grace and patience, because that is not my intent,
7 and it never would be. But this can be a very emotional
8 topic. It can be very emotional and value oriented for
9 folks, and so I just want to respect that as we're
10 listening to each other as well from that perspective.

11 so let me see how I can best summarize. This is going
12 to sound pretty simple on a complex topic, but when
13 reading through the objections and when talking about elk
14 and elk habitat management, a lot of what I was hearing
15 and reading, I should say, is there was a strong desire
16 from a component of the objectors to want to stay with the
17 forest plan standards and guidelines that were in the '86
18 forest plans. I have a couple questions around that, but
19 it was things are working, the population has increased,
20 it's because we had the right standards in place.
21 Therefore, why are you looking at not having the same
22 standards in place? My simplistic paraphrasing of where
23 we're at.

24 On the flip side, there were some other folks that
25 were saying because the population numbers have increased,

1 why do we still have to be as strict? And it's really not
2 a population or habitat issue as much as it is a
3 distribution issue, and it's on the social side, i.e.,
4 hunting impacts to private land and ranching country; you
5 know, that side of it.

6 So you have the ecological/biological, you have the
7 social part of it, and a whole spectrum in between that
8 was put forward. Some of that also tied in concern that
9 we as an agency, in the analysis, did not take into
10 account what is being felt to see as the best science, and
11 our analysis therefore was incomplete.

12 So that is very rough paraphrasing, and you can
13 imagine the whole spectrum in between there. But that was
14 a lot of what we heard in various words on paper. And
15 what I think we understood as really a key issue along
16 that is not that elk isn't important, we didn't have
17 anybody say, you know, it's not important, why do you
18 care, or anything along those lines. It was more just how
19 we're going about managing them and how it ties into the
20 social side as much as the ecological/biological side for
21 the species.

22 I'm going to pause there. I know that was rough. But
23 is there anything that you heard me say that just makes
24 you sit on edge and you're like, yeah, not even close, or
25 that you feel you want to clarify before we dig into the

1 dialogue further at this point or add to?

2 I'm looking. I don't see hands or anybody going off
3 mute.

4 Shawn, did you see any hands that I may not be seeing?

5 MR. JOHNSON: No, I didn't, Leanne. And the only
6 other thing I was going to say, and I can't recall if you
7 said it just this morning or this afternoon as well, but
8 that Sara's team and the whole planning team is on standby
9 too for technical questions, if those come up. And that's
10 kind of at your discretion if you want to call on them.
11 They are joining us this afternoon as well.

12 MS. MARTEN: Yes. Great. Thanks, Shawn.

13 Yes, they're listening in and, as we go forward, if
14 there's a need or we need to pull something up on screen,
15 we'll definitely reach out. Thank you. I should have
16 mentioned that.

17 So let me just kind of -- with that broad overview,
18 and we'll tease it out in the time we have here, I have
19 some questions that were just coming to mind with some of
20 the proposed remedies that some of you put out for thought
21 and consideration. And a couple of you may have heard me
22 ask this earlier this morning if you happened to be on,
23 but some of you were not, so I want to repeat the
24 question. One of the remedies was very much just retain
25 the standards in the '86 forest plans and move them into

1 the revised 2020 forest plan for elk. I need some help
2 with that.

3 You know, the format and how we did the plans back in
4 the '80s looked different. It was under a different
5 planning rule. We've learned since then and evolved. I
6 mean, you're talking three decades ago on that. But we
7 also had two very different forest plans on the Lewis and
8 Clark National Forest and the Helena National Forest back
9 in the '80s. And when you look at how elk was referred
10 to, and big game security, the standards were done
11 differently and approached differently. And I'm not
12 saying one is right or wrong, but I'm curious, a couple
13 questions for the folks that threw that out as a remedy.

14 Number one, I'm not sure which forest plan approach
15 you were referring to. I can speculate, and I think I
16 know, but I need to make sure I'm not jumping to the wrong
17 conclusions. And then second, I could use some help
18 understanding, through your lens and your view, what it is
19 in the 2020 revised plan that you feel that there's a gap.
20 Why do we need to, in your mind, move standards that are
21 from three decades ago forward? What is it that's
22 missing? I know the format is different. I know the
23 wording can be different. But what is it that's really
24 missing when it comes down to how we would move forward on
25 behalf of elk habitat management?

1 I don't know if that came across real clear, but we
2 can start there, and then if I need to help clarify what
3 I'm trying to get at, let me know. But can folks help me
4 out with those two key questions?

5 Go ahead, Matthew.

6 MR. BISHOP: Yeah, maybe I'll jump in. I mean,
7 I'm not a biologist, I'm just a lawyer. But at least as
8 one who worked with the Helena Hunters on the objection,
9 having really dedicated maybe 20-plus pages to this issue,
10 I think our biggest concern is that there's not a single
11 standard in the new revised plan for big game. And a lot
12 of the standards that were there before in the '86 plan, I
13 think there were maybe ten, at least five or six included
14 a pretty specific hiding cover component and a road
15 density piece to them as well.

16 I don't think we're necessarily saying that you should
17 keep the '86 plans. In some ways, we really like them and
18 think it's an alternative you should look at. But at the
19 very least, having some sort of standards in place for
20 summer range, winter range, security to have both a hiding
21 cover component and a road density component. And
22 understanding that if you apply the best available
23 science, those percentages may need to change, things may
24 need to be updated based on the particular elk herd unit
25 or area of the forest, if you're talking about drier

1 conditions on the east side, and reviewing the best
2 science and coming up with maybe new standards.

3 I think our big concern and disappointment with the
4 new plan was that it was all, it seemed like an all-or-
5 nothing approach, that the standards were all scrapped and
6 we have nothing in place now in terms of big game
7 standards. And understanding that we'd like to -- maybe
8 the '86 standards can be updated, but we'd like to see
9 something there. And we'd in particular like to see a
10 hiding cover component, because we think that's critical
11 and supported by the best available science.

12 so our objection on this issue really tees off of that
13 change and raises all sorts of concerns, both in terms of
14 NEPA and impacts to other species. Because, you know, a
15 lot of animals and species benefited from those standards,
16 not just big game species. But we think those were
17 important. We think they were working. And I guess at
18 the end of the day, we felt like at the very least, they
19 could be tweaked and updated, but not abandoned.

20 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So let me tease that out a
21 little bit more, if I could. That was very helpful. And
22 this is for you, Matthew, or others can feel free to jump
23 in.

24 so if I think about the way the forest plan is
25 structured right now, and the format, oftentimes we have

1 guidelines and standards that may or may not be underneath
2 this -- it may not be just, like, in a section that says
3 "Elk." You know, they're under different species; some of
4 it's under human benefit sections because of distribution
5 and the social side.

6 what I'm hearing you say is in your mind, and who
7 you're representing, there's a gap for needed components
8 in the forest plan to meet what you feel is needed to
9 maintain security habitat for multiple big game species,
10 not just elk, on that part of it. And so it's not that,
11 you know, they're not just easily found. You just aren't
12 seeing where there's components that the end result is
13 having some kind of habitat management that would be
14 secure for big game management. Is that accurate on my
15 part? Okay.

16 I'm curious, then, if I tease that out a little bit
17 more, do you have any thoughts, or anybody else, on the --
18 There's security for the big game, but really, it's -- And
19 how we analyze that is a tool; you know, it's an analysis
20 process. But it's really the outcomes and objectives
21 we're looking at, which is, you know, the distribution of
22 the species from that standpoint, both ecologically and
23 for social reasons, you know, hunting and all the
24 different -- enjoyment of viewing, you know, all the
25 different things from that. How does that play into what

1 you were saying, Matthew, or does it, from that
2 standpoint? And if not you, somebody else. I don't want
3 to keep putting you on the spot. You just happened to
4 speak up first.

5 MR. BISHOP: Could you repeat the question,
6 Leanne? I want to make sure I understood it.

7 MS. MARTEN: Sure. I'll try, and you tell me if
8 it's the same question. I'm trying to get at, you know,
9 how we analyze and the process we use to analyze the
10 habitat and the, quote/unquote, "security." You know, you
11 brought up road density. You know, it's a tool, it's an
12 analysis tool, but what we're really trying to get at is
13 the overall objectives and outcome of big game management
14 and why we manage for big game.

15 I mean, it's the ecological and biological for the
16 species and the habitat to support the species, but you
17 also have the social side of it. You know, people want to
18 be able to view the species, they want to be able to
19 recreationally go out and hunt the species. You know,
20 there's that whole side to it. It's all of that combined.
21 And I was curious on how you view that. You know, it's
22 not just about just the habitat and security and the
23 biological/ecological needs of elk. There is all
24 different sides of that that include the human social
25 side.

1 MR. BISHOP: Right.

2 MS. MARTEN: And I just didn't know if your
3 thoughts were there or if you were looking strictly at the
4 security, and that equates to the right distribution.

5 MR. BISHOP: Well, and I'll let Gayle jump in. I
6 mean, I think from Helena Hunters' perspective, it's
7 really about managing for hunting opportunity and big game
8 habitat on our public lands. So lots of times, I'll see
9 in responses that people talk a lot about elk numbers of
10 the elk herd unit or a different way to measure elk. And
11 a lot of that addresses more numbers primarily on private
12 lands.

13 And I think from Helena Hunters' perspective, it's
14 really important to manage for big game habitat on our
15 public lands. And by doing so, in some ways you'd
16 actually relieve a lot of the pressure that's happening on
17 private land if you were managing habitat and security on
18 our national forest lands. There would be less need for
19 elk to leave those areas.

20 But because in a lot of ways -- I mean, we had the '86
21 plan. We think it's good. We think it needs some
22 updating. But I think the Forest Service's constant
23 striving to achieve those hiding cover components or
24 standards and road density has in some ways been
25 beneficial to elk, but we've fallen short in a number of

1 ways. That's part of the reason there's a lot of
2 controversy over a lot of these timber sale projects and
3 whatnot.

4 But we'd like to see more management and more emphasis
5 and at least retain some of binding standards that give us
6 some certainty that big game habitat will continue to be
7 maintained on public lands. So the focus is really on
8 maintaining habitat on public lands as well as hunter
9 opportunity on our public lands.

10 MS. MARTEN: And Gayle, I'll give you a chance to
11 jump in here in a minute.

12 So part of what I'm also hearing is, you know, we have
13 a lot of guidelines and standards in various sections of
14 the forest plan regarding vegetation management, as an
15 example. But you're not seeing a tie or connecting the
16 dots between how those may be tied to big game and
17 ecological security for other big game animals. It's not
18 clear to you, if they're tied, or if they should be, how
19 they are. Is that fair?

20 MR. BISHOP: Well, yeah, I guess, Leanne, just to
21 kind of maybe throw it back to you, are there specific
22 standards in the timber section that maybe I overlooked
23 that you feel would address or at least provide a proxy
24 for what was there under the '86 plan in terms of the
25 percentages --

1 MS. MARTEN: You know, I'm not sure about
2 providing a proxy. I think there is definitely some in
3 the vegetation section. And maybe Wendy or others, if
4 there's an example there that we can pull up here in a few
5 minutes, that might be helpful, just to give an example of
6 what I'm thinking of. I don't know -- I'm not saying that
7 you'll interpret it the same way, but what the intent was
8 with that component or standard in the vegetation. And
9 I'll ask the team if they can maybe look for one, and
10 maybe we can pull one up here shortly. I'll give them a
11 few minutes to pull one up just as an example, Matthew,
12 and see if that helps.

13 And maybe while they're doing that, we can --

14 MR. BISHOP: That would be great.

15 MS. MARTEN: -- Gayle jump in. Are you okay with
16 that?

17 MR. BISHOP: Yes. Thanks.

18 MS. JOSLIN: well, I guess I would suggest that
19 there needs to be some very intense attention upon what
20 happens when you do the site-specific projects on the
21 ground. You were talking earlier about this is a planning
22 process and then we're going to move to site-specific
23 issues, circumstances on the ground.

24 And if I had a way today to pull up site-specific
25 photographs to show people here, and I don't know how to

1 do that, but I have them handy, of some of the
2 site-specific situations that we have experienced on the
3 ground as the result of recent very large projects. I
4 don't think that they're in the best interest of wildlife,
5 for sure. And those are the sorts of things that I think
6 that we need to be aware of when it comes to a
7 distribution of wildlife or elk in particular when we're
8 talking about game damage issues for private landowners.

9 Fish, wildlife & Parks, which I was an employee there
10 for more than 30 years, responds to landowner issues, I
11 would say. Pardon me, Fish, wildlife & Parks folks, if
12 you don't agree with this, but this is my point of view.
13 The Legislature drives state government, and Fish,
14 wildlife & Parks responds to landowners. And therefore,
15 when activities that occur on public lands disturb some
16 component of wildlife habitat on public lands, then those
17 public land activities are, if not directly at least
18 indirectly, impacting a whole suite of private landowners.
19 And I think that we need to pay attention to that, because
20 we've got a couple angles here going when it comes to
21 political pressure coming on the landscape and on the
22 wildlife that are out there.

23 And so I would caution that unless we have some sort
24 of standards for wildlife on the ground, that we're not
25 going to see the kind of outcomes that we need to see

1 because there are other pressures that take over. And I
2 could go on for quite a while here, but I'll leave it at
3 that for the moment.

4 MS. MARTEN: Fair enough. Thanks, Gayle.

5 So part of, you know, the challenge we have, of
6 course, is we have desired conditions, we have objectives,
7 we have guidelines, we may or may not have the exact
8 standards that you saw in the '86 plans, but we have --
9 what do I want to say, we have a whole conglomerate of
10 things in the plan to move us forward on how to manage
11 public lands for the multiple uses that we're responsible
12 for, big game definitely being one of them. And the
13 confidence that you may or may not have that we're
14 actually going to be doing that when it's not in a
15 standard is something that I hear coming through: If it's
16 not in a standard, does it leave us too vulnerable to
17 other influences and then we won't fulfill what our
18 desired condition is from that standpoint.

19 That was me paraphrasing some of what you were saying.
20 I know that, you know, there's all different things that
21 we look at. You know, back in the '80s, we all know that
22 the situation back then was also different from the
23 standpoint when you're just talking elk and where the elk
24 herd numbers were at and some of those things too, and
25 that fluctuates over time ecologically and biologically on

1 that part of it. So I appreciate that, and the different
2 perspectives that you're coming from. And it helps me put
3 context on what I was reading and have been reading.

4 I think, Al, you had your hand up or you've been off
5 mute, so I think you were next.

6 And Shawn, help me here because I'm not seeing hands
7 again for some reason.

8 MR. JOHNSON: I don't know that there are hands,
9 but both Al and Tom I think want to add their bit to this
10 conversation. So let's start with Al and then go over to
11 Tom.

12 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Okay. Thanks. Again, my
13 comments are really focused on the Elkhorns, and you've
14 got our comments about the things that we were looking
15 for. There are some very specific guidelines that we feel
16 have been weakened out of where the Elkhorns has stood in
17 the past. In the '86 plan, it was set up as a wildlife
18 management area, and in this plan, we feel that, with the
19 wording and the standards, it's been relegated to just a
20 general wildlife situation, because of some of the words
21 that have been taken out of the standards. And we
22 provided you with our proposed language.

23 The other thing with the discussion about the
24 standard, especially security stuff, is we just put some
25 language in that said, you know, any vegetation work has

1 to deal with security, hiding cover. Those things have
2 changed. That's been the issue with the '86 plan, is some
3 of those things have changed, knowledge has changed, the
4 effects have changed, some of those things.

5 So we didn't really try and hone in and say you've got
6 to follow this standard, but we did say that any
7 vegetation work is going to require that work to be
8 assessed against the hiding and security issues. And that
9 should help allow for some flexibility and also allows for
10 knowledge transition. And so that's why we worded it the
11 way we did. We could have come back and said, yeah, we
12 want everything to stay the way it was in the plan because
13 it's a number, we can use it, and that kind of thing.

14 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

15 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: But we also know that those
16 things change, and so that was our thinking there. We're
17 just extremely concerned that the wording in some of these
18 guidelines has lost its emphasis for wildlife, especially
19 in wildlife areas. The Elkhorns, obviously to us, is
20 important, but there are other wildlife areas on the
21 forest, and those areas need to be addressed from the
22 standpoint of a wildlife habitat management scenario
23 rather than just relegated to, yeah, think about the
24 wildlife when you're doing all this stuff. It ought to
25 be -- at least in the Elkhorns, it ought to be the

1 wildlife issues have to drive the standards for what
2 things are going to happen here.

3 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Al. And if I could tease
4 out just one part of that. And I do recall that had you
5 some specific wording, which I appreciate. This is a
6 generalization, and so I know it's not black-and-white,
7 but on some of that, if the same wording was moved from a
8 guideline to a standard, would you still have the same
9 concern that there's some words missing?

10 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: If the same wording that's
11 in the plan right now, in the draft, was changed from a
12 guideline to a standard, that would not satisfy our
13 objection. We gave you some specific wording about just
14 how the emphasis is added. And whether it's a guideline
15 or standard, that wording has to change. Okay?

16 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

17 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Thank you.

18 MS. MARTEN: Yeah, I appreciate that. I just
19 wanted to make sure I was understanding correctly on that
20 part. So thanks. Very helpful.

21 Tom, go right ahead.

22 And then after Tom, we do have something we might be
23 able to show -- Deb you're next, so we'll let Tom and Deb
24 go from there.

25 MR. PARTIN: Thank you, Leanne. And you're

1 absolutely right, elk is huge in Montana, obviously, with
2 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and all of the interest in
3 elk and elk herds. AFRC's focus is primarily on forest
4 health, but I want to emphasis that with good forest
5 health, I think we have wildlife health as well and elk
6 health.

7 A lot has changed since the 1986, '87 plans. You look
8 at the forest conditions on the Helena-Lewis and Clark,
9 we've had a tremendous lodgepole pine epidemic, also
10 Douglas-fir tussock moth and other insects that have
11 ravaged the forests, and we're left with a lot of dead
12 timber out there, and a lot of this lodgepole is currently
13 in a condition that it's falling down. And it really
14 doesn't create a good habitat right now for elk as far as
15 hiding or for forage. They can't get through it. It
16 doesn't produce the forage they need.

17 Hence, I think there's a lot of opportunity to improve
18 elk habitat with some management in these stands, and
19 we're seeing that. I've seen it firsthand on a lot of
20 projects on the Helena-Lewis and Clark where we've had the
21 opportunity to go in, remove a lot of that dead and dying
22 lodgepole, thin the stands out, and have not only a
23 healthy stand but some good forage underneath. So I think
24 it can be done.

25 And I know you've got a scientist on that's done some

1 studies on elk as far as what they need for cover and what
2 they need for forage. And I've looked at a lot of studies
3 that have come out recently, one in particular that the
4 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation helped publish. Where your
5 1986 plan focused a lot more on cover, I think we're
6 transitioning into more of a forage need for the summer
7 forage and fall forage for the elk cows and their calves.
8 So I think this has to be put into your new plan, the
9 importance of this, and the ability to keep the elk herds
10 healthy.

11 The last point I'd like to make with the unhealthy
12 stands on the forest, a lot of the lower-elevation private
13 lands, probably including Fish & wildlife lands, have been
14 treated for forest health, and the ranches have been
15 treated for forest health. They've removed their dead and
16 dying. Elk can get through there, and with opening up
17 these stands, you have more forage. And I think it's just
18 a draw down to those lower-elevation stands where the elk
19 are transitioning away from the national forest lands,
20 where they don't have the best opportunities, down to the
21 private lands. And I think with a little more focus with
22 your new plan on the management aspects, timber management
23 aspects, I think that can change.

24 So I do think, again, forest health, elk health go
25 hand in hand and just want to get that incorporated into

1 your thoughts on the new plan.

2 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Tom. I appreciate
3 it.

4 Deb, you have your hand up.

5 MS. O'NEILL: Yes. Thank you. I'm Deb O'Neill,
6 Fish, wildlife & Parks. Pardon me for looking away. I
7 have a couple of monitors that I'm reading from.

8 So I just wanted to read a sentence from the
9 Forestwide section in the wildlife. It says: Plan
10 components for wildlife are describe below where needs
11 exist separately from the vegetation-related components,
12 and where specific-species components are needed.

13 So Leanne, you were suggesting perhaps maybe it was
14 covered in the vegetation section, perhaps, and it sounds
15 like some objectors think that some more species-specific
16 standards for elk are needed, and the plan allows for
17 that. So what I'm offering is that Fish, wildlife & Parks
18 would be happy to work -- would support that and would be
19 happy to be working with Forest Service and others to
20 draft some language for the species-specific standards
21 here that the plan allows for.

22 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Deb. I appreciate that.

23 And part of what -- I do need to clarify something I
24 mentioned earlier. Like in our vegetation sections, it
25 may not be a standard that specifically calls out big

1 game, but when we look at the components, the forest plan
2 components, the guidelines, the desired conditions
3 holistically, you know, when you're looking at the whole
4 ecosystem health, where that plays in with wildlife
5 management and big game, as you guys know, and Deb, I'm
6 not telling you anything you don't know, you know, plays
7 into it from that standpoint.

8 Because, obviously, we're managing for multiple uses,
9 you know, and not just a species or just big game. So
10 it's trying to take all of that into account and the
11 various designations on that part of it. And it's complex
12 and challenging for all of us on that part of it.

13 I'm trying to figure out how to ask my next question,
14 because I'm not quite sure -- There's a lot running around
15 in my head right now. When it comes to the proposed
16 remedy, which was supplementing our environmental impact
17 analysis and having more, just that, analysis -- and I was
18 going to glance at my paper here just to get the right
19 wording -- and potential impacts to wildlife, and it said
20 elk or other wildlife population numbers. I'm not sure
21 who put the proposed remedy in the room, and I apologize,
22 I don't remember which objection it came from, but it was
23 supplementing our analysis to show potential impacts to
24 elk and other wildlife population numbers.

25 I'm wondering if folks remember who did that, and if

1 it was you, if you could help me understand what you feel
2 is missing in the analysis. Is it the fact that it didn't
3 show a direct elk numbers are here or this big game
4 population is at this point and we expect it to go to this
5 number, an actual number? Is that what you were hoping to
6 see? I'm having a hard time putting my head around what
7 that supplemental analysis would be or what the
8 expectation would be with that. And open to anybody who
9 can help me with that one. As everybody is going, was
10 that me and did I ask for that.

11 Go ahead, Gayle.

12 MS. JOSLIN: Well, I am not sure that I can -- I
13 don't know who proposed that. I know that talking about
14 elk numbers has been a distraction to what the real issue
15 is with habitat or elk habitat. Elk numbers can be
16 reflected, even when there is very bad habitat -- You can
17 get high elk numbers when you have poor habitat on public
18 lands, but you will not have available elk on public lands
19 with that poor habitat. You can get numbers increasing,
20 and elk learn very quickly to be able to reproduce and to
21 make a livelihood on private lands that are available and
22 unavailable -- that are available to them but unavailable
23 to the State for their management techniques, which is
24 generally hunting. So numbers isn't the issue.

25 And what was good about the original forest plan

1 standards is that it talked about bull elk security and
2 bull elk, because our general hunting season is predicated
3 on the opportunity for any hunter to be able to go afield
4 and hunt for an elk, which is generally going to be for a
5 bull elk, on public lands. And so if you don't have the
6 habitat security that holds all types of elk on public
7 lands, they're not available for the hunter, but you can
8 get population expansions out there on private lands where
9 then we have complaints about depredation and game damage
10 and that sort of thing.

11 So I have to disagree with Tom, that forest health as
12 the way we're seeing it unfold is not going hand in hand
13 with elk habitat and its improvements across the
14 landscape. So I would suggest that we go back and review
15 why there would be even an elk numbers discussion here,
16 because it's a red herring, I believe.

17 MS. MARTEN: Anybody else have thoughts on what
18 Gayle just said?

19 Go ahead, Jeff.

20 MR. BRADLEY: This is Jeff. And this is probably
21 more of a question for you, Gayle, just based on what you
22 said, and the bull elk security premise that was put
23 forth. It seems like that's a societal decision, to have
24 a season, a recreational game season to go hunt bull elk.
25 So it seems like there's perhaps other remedies to deal

1 with that issue, either by restricting licenses -- And
2 granted, I'm a hunter, so I'm not necessarily in love with
3 that idea, if I don't get a tag, a B tag or something like
4 that.

5 But it does seem like there are other remedies that
6 are perhaps more flexible than a forest plan which, in the
7 case of this forest plan, has been around for quite some
8 time that would allow for opportunity as needed and, at
9 the same time, really concentrating on the end result that
10 FWP is looking for, which matches up with one of the many
11 multiple uses of the forest.

12 MS. JOSLIN: Should I respond to that?

13 MS. MARTEN: Yes. Feel free. Part of the point
14 of this is you guys have a dialogue amongst yourselves and
15 any potential remedies, so go for it.

16 MS. JOSLIN: Well, I would suggest that what
17 we're looking at is one of the bedrock traditions across
18 Montana is hunting. And that's a huge economic driver in
19 the state, yet -- and we started with hunting seasons in
20 this state that focused on elk and bull elk hunting
21 decades and decades ago. The Fish, Wildlife & Parks I
22 think was actually created around 1901.

23 And so we've had more than 120 years of elk hunting
24 opportunities and traditions that exist across the
25 landscape. And I don't think that you would see many

1 hunters saying that we should make restrictions on hunting
2 or go strictly to a permit season. I don't think that's
3 where we're going to try to go with this. Maybe there are
4 some that would be promoting that. But I do think that as
5 far as one of the many uses of the national forest,
6 hunting is one of them that occurs for a few months a
7 year, and it should be accommodated in some way.

8 I see you're shaking your head, Leanne.

9 MS. MARTEN: No. The only thing I was shaking my
10 head at was from the standpoint of when you get into the
11 hunting and the complexities and what's our jurisdiction
12 versus the State's, it just gets confusing on that part of
13 it. So that's what I was shaking my head at, Gayle. I
14 apologize. I was just thinking to myself this just
15 underlies all the complexities that enter into this.

16 MS. JOSLIN: Well, there's no doubt it's complex.

17 MS. MARTEN: Because we, of course, don't have
18 the authority to control hunting seasons or permits.

19 I understand what you're saying, Jeff, and I
20 appreciate the dialogue. But from our standpoint, that
21 isn't something that, even if we wanted to, we could do on
22 that.

23 So I didn't mean to cut you off, Gayle. That was rude
24 on my part, and I apologize. I wasn't trying to cut you
25 off. I was just thinking of the complexity there from a

1 federal standpoint and federal lands and what we have
2 jurisdiction over.

3 MS. JOSLIN: No problem. I agree, it's extremely
4 complex, and that's why it takes a whole lot of discussion
5 to bring out every angle of what's being discussed. And I
6 don't know that there is an opportunity or not to start to
7 bring in site-specific situations, and we could get bogged
8 down in that forever, but they might show easier with a
9 few photographs than it would be to talk about it forever.
10 But I don't know how to do that, like I said before, at
11 least in this format.

12 MS. MARTEN: No, I appreciate that. And I know
13 some of that was part of various objections too, so we do
14 have some of that that will be part of the bigger
15 consideration in addition to this dialogue.

16 Tom, I think I saw your hand up?

17 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. I was going to say Gayle and
18 I might disagree on some things, but I think it is
19 important to note that in Montana and in a lot of western
20 states, we have moved our elk herds from the national
21 forests down to the private lands, and the private lands
22 have a tremendous amount of pressure on them. And as
23 Gayle points out, a lot of the elk numbers on private
24 lands aren't accessible to the general public for hunting.

25 so I think in your plan revision, you really have to

1 take a deep look at why have we lost these elk herds on
2 public land and what do we need to really do, in ways of
3 management or in ways of roads, access or what it is, to
4 retain those numbers. I think that's really imperative to
5 do that and to reclaim that elk population on national
6 forests. And I think one way of doing that is taking --
7 as I mentioned earlier, taking a look at some of these new
8 studies that have come out by Rocky Mountain Elk, by the
9 Forest Service, that seem to trend towards the need for
10 more forage, and look at it in that direction. And I
11 think that might help you get to where you want to be on
12 your forest plan revision.

13 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Tom.

14 So one of the things that's running through my mind as
15 I'm thinking about, you know, elk habitat management and
16 elk security, elk numbers, hunting, the social side of it
17 that -- Jeff and Gayle, you guys were having a good
18 dialogue on that. You know, when I think elk, it's one of
19 the many big game species, of course, and not everything
20 is going to be housed on the elk from that standpoint.

21 So just thoughts on just that, you know, big game,
22 management of big game. Again, it's one of many multiple
23 uses that we manage on the national forests, the lands on
24 your behalf, members of the public. But, you know, when
25 you look at how we use the tool we are using and the

1 analysis and the outcomes we are looking for, I hear some
2 of the very -- Al, from you, very special places,
3 place-based concerns on some shifts we had on how our
4 components, our standards, and our guidelines are worded
5 that you're seeing as taking away from the wildlife
6 management emphasis in the Elkhorns, as an example, and
7 from what it was and is currently to where it would be
8 under our new plan worded as is.

9 I'm wondering about other thoughts on just the bigger
10 picture across the whole geographical area of the
11 Helena-Lewis and Clark and the big game and management of
12 big game. Is there thoughts on that or is it truly just
13 the elk portion, or was there other portions for big game
14 in general of concern or thoughts on changes there?

15 MR. JOHNSON: And as you're thinking about that,
16 just a flag to transition to a question from Adam after we
17 get done with this conversation, Leanne.

18 MS. MARTEN: Perfect. Thank you.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah.

20 MR. GROVE: Yeah. Not so much to Leanne's most
21 recent question, more just kind of Fish, wildlife & Parks'
22 I guess observations on trying to use overall elk numbers.

23 At Fish, wildlife & Parks, we collect elk numbers at
24 the hunting district level. Every hunting district varies
25 in the amount of public land, in this case Forest Service

1 land, in the hunting district. And a lot of times, our
2 elk numbers may be over our management objective, which we
3 do not consider to be a good thing. But that does not
4 equate to large numbers of elk on public land, back to
5 some of the comments, you know, Gayle and others made.

6 A lot of times, just because -- again, just because we
7 have high elk numbers in a hunting district does not
8 necessarily mean we have good elk numbers on, on private
9 land. There's a lot of things that go into that;
10 security, cover, forage, hunting pressure on public,
11 private land, and everything like that. So I just want to
12 caution folks that are focused on just looking at numbers.

13 The same with hunting pressure. You know, a lot of
14 times, Forest Service wants to use total hunter days in a
15 hunting district. And again, that includes not only
16 people hunting on Forest Service land but also folks
17 hunting on private land as well. Like I say, in many
18 cases, we have large numbers of elk that spend little time
19 on national forest land. They are predominantly private
20 land year-around elk or whatever, again, for a variety of
21 reasons and everything like that. So I just kind of
22 wanted to interject that there.

23 Like I say, one of the things we're more focused on,
24 kind of back to what Gayle touched on, we're more
25 interested in -- we figure if we can keep more elk on

1 public land, i.e., Forest Service, for a longer time
2 period, particularly during the hunting season, that helps
3 us achieve our management objectives of trying to reduce
4 elk numbers, particularly in areas where we're over
5 objective.

6 You know, if you go back to the 2013 collaborative
7 recommendations, part of the group's efforts was trying to
8 look at how can we keep elk on national forests longer,
9 because we didn't want private, posted land to, quote, "be
10 the inherent security" or whatever. We want to maintain
11 that elk security on national forest land. That being
12 said, we recognize kind of in the working group that --
13 And it relates to this new forest plan. You've got
14 ten geographic areas, a lot of variation. There's
15 probably not a one-size-fits-all type situation. And we
16 kind of wanted to focus more, you know -- I guess in this
17 case, maybe look at the individual geographic area but
18 recognize that there is a lot of variation out on the
19 ground.

20 And that was the one thing that we felt we couldn't
21 really justify, a hard, fast numerical standard that
22 applied everywhere. That doesn't mean stuff like security
23 and cover and -- I mean, all of that is important. We
24 just didn't feel that you could just take one number and
25 apply it to everywhere and that would work everywhere. In

1 some cases, maybe it would be sufficient; in other places,
2 it actually may be insufficient or something. So anyway,
3 I'll just throw that out for folks to consider.

4 MS. MARTEN: I appreciate that, Adam. That's
5 very helpful. And as you just summarized nicely at the
6 end there, that is one of the challenges we have, is we
7 have a lot of different geographical areas, a lot of
8 intermixed ownership between the National Forest System of
9 the spread-out Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest.
10 And the situation is not identical across the entire
11 forest on many areas that we're responsible for managing
12 from that.

13 And I think, Al, you talked about the Elkhorns as a
14 specific area versus talking the whole Helena-Lewis and
15 Clark Forest. You were very specific on the place-based
16 concerns. Not that you don't care about the rest of it,
17 but you were very specific on what you're looking at for
18 that wildlife management unit.

19 So I'm looking at the time here, and, obviously, this
20 is very complex. This has helped me get a better feel for
21 what folks had in their written objections and the
22 diversity of thought going into it.

23 One last question I would have, and I was just curious
24 what folks's thoughts are on this. You know, the spectrum
25 of what I'm hearing goes anywhere from the social

1 distribution -- or, excuse me, the distribution for social
2 reasons on private land for hunting, and, you know, a lot
3 of that gets into outsider jurisdiction on the hunting
4 seasons, but what you just described, Adam, the
5 population, just thinking elk right now. You know, it's
6 not like there's a herd of elk and they all equitably
7 distribute themselves across the land base, you know, they
8 choose national forest versus private. You know, they go
9 where they go.

10 The thing that I'm curious about is if you look over
11 the last several decades and you're looking at the
12 monitoring that's been done -- And Gayle, I hear what
13 you're saying, you know, numbers can be deceiving, so I'm
14 putting the caveat that I recognize that with this
15 question. I'm just trying to do some calibration.

16 The population has been increasing compared to where
17 it was in the '80s, from that. And, at the same time, I
18 hear -- I think I heard you say, Adam, that just because
19 the numbers are up there doesn't mean that we still have
20 them on the public lands. But then on the other hand, I'm
21 hearing people say we need to keep the same standards
22 because it's working. And if the real issue is
23 distribution, I guess I'm still looking for clarification
24 on how the same standards from three decades ago is
25 helping with distribution. And I may be missing something

1 there, so if somebody can help me, just give me
2 kindergarten level on what you're thinking there.

3 Go ahead, Gayle. Go for it.

4 MS. JOSLIN: Well, are you sure?

5 MS. MARTEN: I asked. I'm hoping.

6 MS. JOSLIN: The reason I hesitate is because I
7 firmly believe that the existing standards in the
8 1986 plan, had they been consistently applied, would show
9 a very different situation on the landscape right now, but
10 they haven't been. And if we were to revert to those
11 standards and make them work, I think we would see some
12 improvement in distribution of wildlife. But we have to
13 recognize that we can't have huge swaths of public land be
14 denuded of security, and that is and has been what's
15 happening for quite some time.

16 It really started back in 2010. I mean, I've been
17 here for, like I said, actually for 40 years, 40-some
18 years now, working with the forests on these issues, and
19 I've always been in basically the same place. And so I'm
20 seeing what's going on on the landscape and different
21 administrations' approach of management of that landscape.
22 And it's really concerning that in 2010, there was a
23 process wherein the Forest simply suspended application of
24 forest standards when they started their, quote, "healthy
25 forest initiative." And that initiated also this new

1 objection process at that very same time. So we were in a
2 position to no longer have the standards apply when there
3 was large-scale landscape projects coming on board,
4 because they were just exempted from applying their own
5 standards.

6 So I don't think it should be a surprise that we're in
7 the position we're in now, when there's been a lot of
8 activity on the landscape that's changed that security
9 status and basically habitat for other seasonal needs.
10 And that's why I think that we really do need to have some
11 enforceable standards that people will adhere to. And if
12 we don't, we're in for a very huge change out here on the
13 landscape and what wildlife can be sustained. At least
14 that's my belief.

15 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Very helpful. Thank you. I
16 appreciate you expanding on that view on that part of it.
17 Go ahead, Tom.

18 MR. PARTIN: I'll just end up by saying I think
19 you need to make some changes in your plan regarding what
20 some of the new science has pointed out, regardless of
21 what past land management has been or where we're headed.
22 You've got to look at the forage-to-cover ratio. And that
23 started back, a lot of changes with the Jack Ward Thomas
24 studies back in the late '80s, continuing on to
25 Forest Service studies to Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

1 And I think you have to incorporate what the new thought
2 on the forage-to-cover ratio is and keep that in mind as
3 you do your forest health programs or whatever your
4 management strategy is on the forest. And I'll just end
5 with that.

6 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Thank you.

7 And thank you, everyone. I know this topic can be
8 very complex. It can be sometimes frustrating for folks
9 because, you know, we obviously have a real diverse
10 spectrum of viewpoints on what the best route is going
11 forward. So this has helped me tremendously just put some
12 context, like I said, see it through your lens on what I
13 was reading. It always helps to hear it verbalized and to
14 give me a chance to tease out some of the thought
15 processes you guys have been going through. So I
16 appreciate your patience with me on that and your
17 willingness to share, because it is very helpful.

18 And as you can see, not a surprise to anybody, this is
19 one of the many areas that is very complex, is very
20 challenging, and many of us have thoughts that have been
21 expressed, both in writing and here verbally, that is
22 seemingly here's the answer. And so all of those are
23 things that I'll be taking into account as I look at my
24 response to Forest Supervisor Avey on this objection
25 issue, along with the multitude of others that we'll

1 continue discussing over the next couple days.

2 So just before we wrap up here -- I'm looking at the
3 time and really want to honor everybody's time, because
4 everybody took time out of their busy lives just to be
5 with us for this and other topics today for some of you.
6 Any last-minute things you want to make sure is in the
7 room before we close out for the day?

8 Go ahead, Eric.

9 MR. CLEWIS: Yeah. I just want to throw in --
10 you know, it's the wildlife Federation's perspective that
11 we need to have some standards that more specifically
12 guide the Forest in big game management. And I don't
13 think that means explicit numbers or something that says
14 we're going to manage for big game winter habitat.

15 One of the things you brought up too is does the
16 umbrella term of "big game" fit everything, and I don't
17 think it does. I think there are certain species, like
18 bighorn sheep, that have explicit needs that are separate
19 from mule deer and elk. But in general, using the term
20 "big game" I think does provide some guidance if you have
21 the standards in place.

22 And then I also think -- Deb, I think I heard you
23 mention that it would be good for them to coordinate with
24 FWP on actually crafting some of those standards. And I
25 think it would be good for the Helena-Lewis and Clark

1 National Forest staff to pursue that and work with FWP to
2 craft some hardline standards like that.

3 MS. MARTEN: Appreciate it. Thanks, Eric.

4 And just to let folks know, and Adam and Deb are fully
5 aware of this, we have as the staff of Helena-Lewis and
6 Clark been working very closely with FWP throughout the
7 revision. And it's challenging for all of us for all the
8 reasons that's coming up today and in the objections. So
9 we have been working very closely with Deb and Adam and
10 others, including, Adam, you mentioned the uniquenesses in
11 the geographical areas oftentimes. I know we've reached
12 out to your counterparts and the other biologists and
13 really have been trying to work collectively with FWP and
14 others.

15 I'm not saying, Eric, that it's one and done, by any
16 means. But just so folks know that it's been a collective
17 effort and a collective challenge for all of us. Because
18 I know it's challenging for FWP on a lot of the issues
19 that they have jurisdiction over as well along the same
20 topics.

21 So really appreciate everybody bringing all that
22 forward. And, you know, some of the things that we have
23 in the draft plan were jointly worded working with our
24 public, working with FWP, trying to look at something that
25 we thought did the best we could with the information we

1 have. And part of the process is now taking a look at
2 that with fresh eyes with this type of input as well. So
3 we'll move forward and see where it puts us. Not sure,
4 but a lot to think about. So very much appreciate this.

5 Shawn, I'm going to turn it over to you just to wrap
6 us up here.

7 I just want to thank everybody. I know for many of
8 you, you've been on all day. This has been a long day.
9 For those that joined for this topic, I appreciate you
10 taking time out of your day, and for everybody I know
11 listening in as well. And I'm sure I'm going to see
12 several of you over the next couple days too, and I look
13 forward to that, because there's a lot of other topics.

14 So Shawn, all yours.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thanks so much, Leanne. And
16 thanks to everyone who joined this discussion on elk
17 habitat management and all the complexities involved.

18 I did want to just circle back to Matthew. I saw both
19 he and Eric try to jump in there at the end. And if
20 you've got just a closing thought you wanted to share with
21 us, Matthew, I don't want to lose that opportunity.

22 MS. MARTEN: Sorry, Matthew.

23 MR. BISHOP: Thanks, Shawn. That's okay.

24 I just wanted to quickly echo what Eric said there
25 towards the end. And I thought I had heard Deb from Fish,

1 wildlife & Parks open up the opportunity to maybe try to
2 work together to craft some standards in the revised
3 forest plan, and I would certainly encourage the
4 Forest Service to take that approach. I know Helena
5 Hunters would love to be a part of that, if they were open
6 to it -- I know it's time-consuming and complex -- to try
7 to work on updating the standards as opposed to doing away
8 with them completely. So I would just encourage the
9 Forest Service to explore that opportunity.

10 MS. MARTEN: Thanks.

11 Deb, did you have something you wanted to add real
12 quick?

13 MS. O'NEILL: Yeah, real quick, Leanne. Thank
14 you.

15 We have been working -- I have to say the
16 Forest Service staff has gone above and beyond working
17 with FWP, answering our questions, I swear almost at our
18 beck and call sometimes, and really helping us understand
19 what's in the plan. That being said, I think, you know,
20 obviously, there's room for improvement. And we're happy
21 to help where we can if the Forest Service decides that
22 they need to include standards, and it sounds like, from
23 some objectors, that that needs to be done.

24 So yeah, we're happy to work with the Forest and the
25 staff as well as others that you deem appropriate to be a

1 part of that. We're happy to help out where we can. But
2 thank you for your wonderful staff working with us. It's
3 been great.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Well, thanks for those
5 additions, Matthew and Deb. Appreciate it, thinking about
6 what some of those future-looking opportunities might look
7 like as we close out here.

8 We are going to transition to a closing conversation
9 around today, and I would invite -- instead of what we've
10 been doing, inviting only the objectors and the interested
11 parties to join, that anyone that would like to or feels
12 comfortable turning on their camera, to go ahead and do
13 so. That will give Leanne an audience to look at instead
14 of a lot of blank screens as she's sharing some closing
15 remarks and thoughts with us today.

16 But as we do so, the last half hour of today, we've
17 just got dedicated to hearing some overall reflections on
18 how the day went, any key takeaways or thoughts either on
19 the process as a whole or with respect to any of the
20 themes that we've touched on. And then we'll have a
21 couple of updates on just next steps in terms of both
22 meeting documentation and where the process goes from
23 here, and then we'd invite any feedback from you all just
24 in terms of improving the meeting and the meeting process
25 as we move through the next couple of days.

1 So with that, I'm going to turn it back to Leanne to
2 just share any closing thoughts or summarizing remarks
3 that you have at the close of today.

4 MS. MARTEN: Sure. I appreciate it, and thank
5 you.

6 You know, my first thought that was running through my
7 mind is just a big thank you to everyone for today. You
8 know, it's tough topics, and things are challenging, but
9 it's very encouraging because I love the passion, I love
10 the dedication, I love the willingness of people to be
11 speaking up and be part of the process. Because as you
12 heard me say earlier today, it truly is an honor and
13 privilege for all of us to manage your public lands, and
14 we need this engagement. Even when people disagree,
15 that's what healthy dialogue is all about.

16 And we do our best to move forward with wherever we
17 come out and Forest Supervisor Avey comes out on his final
18 decision, understanding that not everybody is going to be
19 in 100 percent agreement. But our intent is hoping that
20 everybody is willing to help then move forward with
21 implementation and still staying engaged and doing it in a
22 collaborative manner from that standpoint.

23 So, you know, today was wildlife issues, various
24 issues this morning on diversity, connectivity, endangered
25 species. This afternoon, we had the species of

1 conservation concern list, and now with elk habitat
2 management. And they're all very important, and they all
3 overlap in many ways, and so I appreciate your patience
4 and grace on just working through the complexities and
5 doing it in a virtual world because of what we're dealing
6 with nationally. It's at least nice we're able to do it
7 virtually.

8 And I appreciate people willing, where they could, to
9 turn on their cameras, because it's really hard to talk to
10 myself on screen and a black screen, so it does help to
11 see other people and your smiling faces. So thank you for
12 being willing to do that if you were able to
13 technologically do that from that standpoint.

14 We have a lot of other wonderful topics coming up over
15 the next couple days that Shawn will quickly summarize for
16 next steps. But for those of you that won't be joining
17 us, just to let you know, as I mentioned, all this will be
18 taken into account as I'm working on the bigger response
19 to all objections, ones we're talking about over the next
20 three days as well as other ones that were part of your
21 written objections, and working on a response letter to
22 Forest Supervisor Avey.

23 That will be coming out this fall. And so when that
24 does come out and is issued to Forest Supervisor Avey, it
25 will be public, and you guys will be able to see how I

1 took into account your objections and the response to your
2 objections from that standpoint. So it will be public.
3 You will get a response as an objector or be able to
4 access it on the web from that standpoint. So we will be
5 trying to pull that together this fall.

6 I know many of you are involved with the
7 Custer Gallatin forest plan revision as well, and we do
8 recognize that there are some of these things, like the
9 connectivity that was brought up earlier, that many of you
10 are seeing as there's some overlap there. So we're trying
11 to be very purposeful about that as well where it's
12 applicable between the two forests and the revision
13 process on that.

14 But otherwise, I really do appreciate it. And great
15 work on the team's part. They were behind the scene with
16 technical assistance and helping make sure folks were
17 getting what they needed to hopefully make this as smooth
18 as we could. And if we have input on how to make this
19 smoother as we go into the next couple days, as Shawn
20 said, please let us know. Because we're learning as we go
21 in the virtual world. Even though we've been doing it for
22 several months, every one is a little bit different.

23 So I'll turn it over to you, Shawn, at this point --
24 or actually, let me pause.

25 Sara, anything you'd like to join in as summary here

1 this afternoon?

2 MS. MAYBEN: I just want to thank everybody for
3 participating. I always think it's good to hear directly
4 from folks and to have the discussion like we did among
5 folks with maybe differing opinions. I think that's
6 always helpful to frame in the issues. And I appreciate
7 Leanne carrying most of the weight today.

8 So thank you, Leanne.

9 MS. MARTEN: All yours, Shawn.

10 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Leanne.

11 And thanks, Sara, too for being there and helping
12 listen and understand what's really at stake here and
13 think about the potential remedies.

14 Thanks, Leanne, too for clarifying some of the next
15 steps and what we're looking forward to, not just over the
16 next couple of days but in the months ahead.

17 Before I go over the agenda for tomorrow and Thursday,
18 I'll just check in with Timory. Is there anything else
19 that you want to make sure that we communicate to folks at
20 the close of today? Did we miss anything?

21 MS. PEEL: No. Just a reminder, if anyone has
22 any technical problems, don't hesitate to reach out to the
23 numbers we're providing. Both Cody and I will be standing
24 by on our phones or by e-mail to help you if you're having
25 trouble getting in the meeting or need access and a quick

1 link back to where some of this information is located on
2 the web.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Timory.

4 And thanks to Cheryl, and thanks to our closed
5 captioning folks who are helping capture the conversation
6 today. That will be another way that this is recorded.

7 We will start up tomorrow at 9:00 a.m., the same Zoom
8 link. We'll start with some opening remarks and welcome
9 between 9:00 and 9:30. Then we'll start the conversation
10 on our next theme, which will be general access, including
11 both motorized and mechanized suitability areas, at
12 10 o'clock. That will be for an hour.

13 We'll take a quick break after that, come back at
14 11:30 for recommended wilderness areas and boundary
15 adjustments. Lunch tomorrow will be from 12:30 to 1:30.
16 1:30 to 2:30 will be designated area management, including
17 Badger-Two Medicine, Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit, and
18 the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. And then
19 we'll end with a summary of the day tomorrow from 2:30 to
20 3:00.

21 The schedule is a little bit different from day to
22 day, so I do encourage you to take a look at the agenda if
23 you haven't seen it. Thursday, a similar start, 9:00 a.m.
24 to 9:30 with an overview of the process, just check in.
25 10 o'clock, we'll turn to conservation watersheds network

1 and downstream water uses. 11:00 to 12:00 will be timber,
2 sustained yield, and reforestation. Lunch on Thursday is
3 from noon to 1:30. We'll come back from 1:30 to 2:30 to
4 discuss range issues, and conclude with a summary from
5 2:30 to 3 o'clock.

6 So I think this has been working well, but the time
7 periods are on here, and we will hold to those as close as
8 possible just because people are jumping in and out based
9 on their availability and interest as well as where they
10 have standing to be a part of the conversation with Leanne
11 and with Sara. But before we jump off today, I would
12 invite any just quick, you know, feedback or guidance on
13 how today went, if there's anything that we can do to
14 improve the overall experience for any of you. I would
15 just invite you to either raise your hand or take yourself
16 off mute to share any feedback that you might have. And
17 if we don't have anything, you know, beyond this, just
18 welcome you back tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. So any feedback
19 today?

20 MR. PARTIN: This is Tom, and I'll just say one
21 thing. The last forest plan revision I sat in on was on
22 the Colville, and we had someone from the Washington, D.C.
23 office kind of run the meeting and talk about the issues.
24 And I just want to tell Leanne it's refreshing to have the
25 regional forester in that role doing it, because you know

1 the region, you know the forest. And having people there
2 underneath you to help you I think really brings it back
3 to the local level.

4 So it's a good format. I'm sorry Bill isn't here, but
5 I know he's doing his job fighting the fires, which is
6 just a tragedy right now, but we'll get through it and
7 have a good revision.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks for sharing that thought,
9 Tom. Really appreciate it.

10 Anyone else?

11 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: I just want to say thanks to
12 Leanne and Sara and all your staff you've got behind you
13 setting all this up. It's a long process, and I think
14 this is a good way to have the opportunity for input at
15 the final hour before you guys start to formulate your
16 final decision and write-ups and all that. So thank you
17 very much.

18 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Al. And there is a whole
19 team behind the scenes here that makes it look really
20 smooth, so appreciate that.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thanks, Al. Appreciate the
22 comment.

23 And lots of gratitude to the team and lots of
24 gratitude to all of you for being a part of the process,
25 not just today but throughout the process. And this

1 really is an opportunity to think about what each of us
2 adds to an effective forest management plan. And I think
3 this demonstrates that a lot of it comes through dialogue.
4 And the issues are complicated, but we are trying to do
5 our best to listen, to understand, and to come up with a
6 really good solution moving forward.

7 Anyone else want to say anything before we jump off
8 today?

9 Leanne, do you want a parting thought?

10 MS. MARTEN: Just thanks to everyone. Enjoy the
11 rest of your day and your evening. And for those that
12 will be joining us tomorrow, we'll see you in the morning.
13 So thanks again.

14 And thank you, Shawn, for all your facilitation and
15 help. Great job.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks. Glad to do it.
17 Thanks, all. We'll see you tomorrow.

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1 GENERAL ACCESS - MOTORIZED AND MECHANIZED SUITABILITY
2 Wednesday, September 30, 2020, 9:00 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.

3 FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana
4 FOREST SERVICE:

5 LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer

6 SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor

7 DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader

8 LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist

9 SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds

10 WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist

11 AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist

12 KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds

13 ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses

14 LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor

15 JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff

16 CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist

17 TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner

18 CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

19 OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

20 BRIAN ASH, Landowner, Strawberry Butte

21 DEB O'NEILL, Fish, wildlife & Parks

22 ADAM GROVE, Fish, wildlife & Parks

23 AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.

24 ZACH ANGSTEAD, Montana Wilderness Association

25 SARAH LUNDSTRUM, National Parks Conservation Assn.

SHERRI LIONBERGER, Backcountry Horsemen of Montana

BLAKE BUSSE, The Pew Charitable Trusts

KENDALL FLINT, Landowner, Badger-Two Medicine

JOHN GATCHELL, MT High Divide Trails Collaborative

LISA BAY, Helena Outdoor Club

ERIC CLEWIS, Montana wildlife Federation

PETER METCALF, Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance

HILARY EISEN, Winter wildlands Alliance

GORDON WHIRRY, Montana Wilderness Association

MIKE ANDERSON, wilderness Society

DAVE COLAVITO, Montana Wilderness Association

SARAH CORSE, Landowner, Badger-Two Medicine

JORDAN REEVES, Upper Blackfoot Collaborative

MARK GOOD, Montana wilderness Association

JENNIFER FERENSTEIN, wilderness Society

BONNIE RICE, Sierra Club

TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council

RANDY GRAY, Badger-Two Medicine

JEFF BRADLEY, Self and Montana Bicycle Guild

RUSS EHNS, Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Assn.

RICK KERR, Choteau

BRYAN LORENZO, Montana Logging Association

DAVE MARI, Montana wilderness Association

CLINT LOOMIS, Montana wilderness Association

1 MR. JOHNSON: We'll get started here and continue
2 to welcome people as they join us on the Zoom meeting this
3 morning. My name is Shawn Johnson, and I'm with the
4 University of Montana, and I'll be helping facilitate
5 today's meeting. So really glad to be here and really
6 grateful for all of you that were able to take the time
7 and join today's conversation.

8 I want to start just by a little bit of orientation to
9 the Zoom meeting platform. And I think everyone saw in
10 the chat box, but I'll repost it again, just a few basics
11 here as we get started, points of contact and just a
12 little renaming opportunity here for people.

13 So one of the things that's nice about Zoom is that we
14 can see all of you and your names and affiliations pretty
15 quickly. It's helpful to have people rename themselves,
16 not just with their name but with their affiliation as
17 well. So if you hover over your box on the Zoom screen
18 and click the three dots on the upper right, it should
19 give you the opportunity to rename yourself. So if you
20 could do that with your first name, last name, and role.
21 I'm just going to do that here for myself. So it should
22 now say "Shawn Johnson, Facilitator." That would be
23 helpful just to help us know who is on today's meeting.

24 For members of the press that are joining us today,
25 we're glad to have Chiara Cipriano, one of the public

1 affairs specialists from the regional office, join us.
2 Her contact information and phone number is in the chat
3 box.

4 If for any reason you need technical assistance today
5 during the meeting or have technical questions about the
6 planning process, both Cody and Timory are on standby to
7 help with those questions. And so you can contact
8 Cody Hutchinson or Timory Peel at the coordinates that are
9 also listed in the chat box.

10 And finally, we are offering closed captioning for
11 those that want to follow along with text as well today.
12 It's a link to an outside box, and so if you click on that
13 URL, it will open another window, but it will provide
14 closed captioning of our entire conversation today.

15 In terms of using Zoom -- I know a lot of people are
16 familiar to remote platforms now that we've been in this
17 space for a few months. But if you want to just quickly
18 follow along as I go through some of the key features,
19 that might be helpful. So you can change your view by
20 using the button in the upper right-hand corner. You can
21 toggle between Speaker View and Gallery View. When you
22 hover over your own box, you'll also get some additional
23 features. You can see that you can rename yourself, you
24 can pin a video, you can mute your audio or video there,
25 so that's helpful.

1 Across the bottom, though, is where you'll see most of
2 the features. And so starting from left to right, you'll
3 have a Mute button for your audio. Next to that, you've
4 got your video, same kind of features, on and off. The
5 Participants button, if you click that, it will give you a
6 list of everyone that's joined us today, and so you'll be
7 able to see everyone's name in list view. That also gives
8 you the opportunity to raise your hand. And so at the
9 bottom of the list of participants, you should see a
10 Raise Hand opportunity. We'll also be looking for
11 people's actual raised hands throughout the day, but we'll
12 be using that feature as well.

13 we'll use the Chat function to share information and
14 links like we did with the contact information at the
15 beginning. So if you click the Chat button, that too will
16 open another window. And I think that's all the key
17 features that we'll need for today in terms of Zoom. But
18 if you have any questions, please let us know.

19 I did also want to let you know that we have a
20 transcriptionist that is joining us today. And so, first
21 of all, thanks, Cheryl, for taking notes for us and
22 capturing this in real time. I know that's a big job.
23 We're doing that so that we have a full transcript of the
24 meeting available at the close of these meetings. And
25 that will be posted when it's available. So that means,

1 for all of us, that we need to speak slowly and clearly so
2 that Cheryl can capture our conversation. Just a reminder
3 that she'll be doing that. And we invite Cheryl to raise
4 her hand and interrupt us if we need to slow down at any
5 point.

6 So that's a lot of the logistics. I'm going to turn
7 now to some introductions, and then we'll go over ground
8 rules and our agenda for the day before closing out this
9 short session that starts our day. I'd like to start
10 by -- Oh.

11 Leanne, do you want to jump in?

12 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Shawn. You might have said
13 this and I missed it.

14 Good morning, everyone. The other thing that helps
15 Cheryl is as we're talking and doing the dialogue, if you
16 could just state your name again for Cheryl so she knows
17 who's talking. Because she's not necessarily looking at
18 the screen as she's trying to type, and that just helps
19 her with the flow.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Awesome. Thank you, Leanne.
21 Appreciate you looking out for Cheryl here. I know we're
22 all trying to do a number of different tasks here.

23 So I want to start by introducing Sara Mayben, who is
24 the deputy forest supervisor for the Helena-Lewis and
25 Clark National Forest. She and her team have been leading

1 this process of developing a new forest plan over the last
2 several years.

3 So Sara, do you want to introduce yourself and your
4 team?

5 MS. MAYBEN: Sure. So good morning, everybody,
6 and welcome. You know, I think this is an important time
7 for us as far as developing a forest plan or revising our
8 forest plan. We appreciate the time you've taken to join
9 us today and provide your insights and have the dialogue.
10 I think it's critically important, it's an important
11 component of listening to our public and serving you all.
12 And so we appreciate the time.

13 I want to take the time to introduce the team members
14 that are joining us today. And Deb Entwistle many of you
15 know. She is the team leader. Elizabeth Casselli,
16 Lori Wollan, Scott Nagel, Kyle Schmitt, Wendy Clark. And
17 I'm going to see if anybody else is turned on. I also
18 want to identify Chiara Cipriano. She is our new public
19 affairs officer and she is joining us. This is actually
20 her first week, and so she's kind of getting thrown into
21 the middle of this and the Zoom world and the virtual
22 world. So welcome, Chiara. And then Amanda Milburn also.
23 I want to welcome the team, thank them. They've done a
24 fantastic job. They continue to do a fantastic job.

25 You won't see Leanne and I taking notes because we're

1 going to rely on Cheryl's, but just know that we're
2 listening, as are the team members, and definitely
3 interested in what you all have to say. So thank you, and
4 welcome.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Sara. Thank you
6 to the team for all the work that you've done over the
7 last few years pulling this plan together.

8 I'd like to now introduce Leanne Marten, the regional
9 forester.

10 Leanne.

11 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Shawn, and thank you,
12 Sara.

13 For those of you that may be wondering where
14 Bill Avey, the forest supervisor, is at this morning --
15 yeah, that's okay, Sara -- Bill got called off on agency
16 priority with one of our fires. And so Sara is sitting in
17 for Bill. He will definitely be briefed and has the
18 transcripts and all of that. He wishes he could be here,
19 but he's where he needs to be on behalf of the Agency
20 right now, filling some really critical needs, as you guys
21 are aware of what's happening just to the west of us and
22 in those regions. So just wanted to make sure you guys,
23 if you're wondering where Bill is at, that's where he's at
24 today.

25 And good morning, everyone, and it's great to be here.

1 welcome back to those of you that were a part of
2 yesterday. But I also saw, just as a real quick glance on
3 the screen here with names, we have a lot of new
4 participants today as well. And the way the agenda is set
5 up, which I think you guys are all aware, is we have to
6 stick to the time frames because we have people that will
7 be coming and going. We fully recognize your taking time
8 out of your very busy daily lives, and so we want -- If
9 you have the opportunity and you're able to join us all
10 day, that's wonderful, but if you're only able to join us
11 during certain topics, we want to honor that and allow
12 people to come and go as needed from that standpoint.

13 So Shawn will definitely be helping us and keeping us
14 on time and making sure -- If we get done a little bit
15 early, we may have a little bit of a break before we go on
16 to the next agenda topic. And that's why. I just wanted
17 to make sure folks were aware of that.

18 And also, I thought I'd spend a little bit of time
19 this morning -- if you were on yesterday, this is a repeat
20 for those, but just on where we got to where we are today
21 and why we have the topics on the agenda we do and why
22 maybe some others that you wanted on the agenda and you
23 may not be seeing those. Let me give you just a little
24 bit of context on just the objections on the Helena-Lewis
25 and Clark revision.

1 we received a little over 150 objectors to the plan
2 revision, and there is about 120 or so unique objection
3 issues on that. we have taken a hard look at all of
4 those. we have a panel on the Forest that took a look at
5 all of them; we have a regional panel of employees; and
6 then we actually brought in a whole panel of employees
7 from outside the region to take a look at the objections
8 and help us go through and make sure we weren't missing
9 things and really look hard at the letters that you all
10 submitted as well as what we had done.

11 And the reason we did that in various stages is, as
12 you can imagine, the team that Sara just introduced and
13 many of the partners here in the region have been working
14 really hard on this revision for a long time, and we can
15 all get too close to anything we're working on. You know,
16 humans are just like that. So we needed, and I wanted, to
17 have some folks that didn't have that background to really
18 be able to take an objective look at what you guys sent
19 in, what you were seeing, and then what we did or did not
20 have in response in the forest plan, the record, and the
21 analysis.

22 when we did that, you know, there were some of these
23 that I just have some questions on and I could use some
24 help on having some more dialogue with all of you, hearing
25 from you some of the context. You know, I've read, but

1 sometimes it's hard in the written word to really
2 understand the full context. So the issues you see on the
3 agenda, those are the ones that I need some more
4 assistance with and will, with Shawn's help today,
5 facilitate a dialogue to try and tease out and get a
6 better understanding of how you are viewing the issues
7 versus just relying on how I may be reading it through my
8 lens on that.

9 You're not going to get set decisions from me today.
10 That will be forthcoming in my response to Forest
11 Supervisor Avey on the objections. And you guys will all
12 have a copy of the letter or access to it on the website
13 on the full response. So even if you don't see your
14 objection issue on the agenda yesterday, today, or
15 tomorrow, it doesn't mean it's not important or that we
16 won't be responding to that. I will be responding to all
17 of the objection issues in my response to Forest
18 Supervisor Avey. It may not be word for word what you had
19 in your letter, because some were similar and we'll be
20 doing some summaries.

21 But they're all important, all important. We just
22 don't have the opportunity to take the time to discuss all
23 120-plus issues in this type of format. I just wanted to
24 put that out there, because I've had some questions on
25 that, and I didn't want to give the impression that if

1 it's not on the agenda we are not taking it seriously or
2 it's not important from that standpoint.

3 The other thing I wanted to spend a little bit of time
4 on is as we go through the agenda today -- And I think
5 several of you may be on for all of the key topic areas;
6 some of you, like I said, may be coming and going. But
7 there is overlap, and that's not a surprise. We had that
8 yesterday with a lot of the wildlife issues that we were
9 talking about, and we're going to see similar today.

10 So I'm going to be trying to do my best -- again,
11 Shawn's my right-hand person here helping me do this --
12 trying to keep it focused on where we are for that topic.
13 And I'm going to be using the briefing papers that were
14 published as a starting point by agenda topic. So I think
15 all of you have access to that. Hopefully you've seen
16 those. But that's going to be the starting point for me
17 to try and summarize what I think I'm hearing from you,
18 get some clarification, have some dialogue. And like I
19 said, I've got some questions, and then depending on the
20 dialogue, you know, more questions will probably come up.

21 And the dialogue is to be with me as the reviewing
22 official, but it's just as important, if not more
23 important, to have you all as objectors and interested
24 persons have the dialogue amongst yourselves, and
25 particularly when we get to proposed remedies. That helps

1 tremendously, because, you know, we're going to have
2 different sides of the spectrum and everything in between
3 on an issue. Not unexpected. That's a part of natural
4 resource management and, frankly, it's to be expected.

5 I have the honor and privilege, and Sara does, as well
6 as all the agency employees, to manage public land on your
7 behalf. It's your land. It's not mine, it's the
8 public's. But not all the public that enjoys our land has
9 the same view on how it should be managed, so that's
10 really what we're going to be trying to tease out. And
11 that's really one of the challenges we all have as
12 stewards of the land.

13 And then lastly, what I want to just put out there is
14 I'm fully aware and recognize, and particularly today but
15 on all the issues, you guys have all spent an enormous
16 amount of time, and you have deep passion, dedication, and
17 care about the management of your public lands, and it is
18 wonderful. I love that. And for some, it's values, and
19 for a lot of people, it's definitely values, and it can
20 feel very personal when I start asking the questions.

21 So I just want to name that I recognize that and also
22 just name that when I'm asking questions, I ask you to
23 just recognize that I am not and I never would ask you to
24 change your personal or your organizational values.
25 That's not the intent of my questions. I'm not going

1 to -- I'm not intending to say you're right or wrong. I'm
2 just, again, trying to get a better understanding of where
3 and how you are seeing things and make sure I'm putting it
4 in the right context as I'm reviewing all the objections
5 and I work on my response to Forest Supervisor Avey.

6 Today's topics can be extremely emotional for several
7 people, and that's okay. I just ask that we respect each
8 other's opinions, we respect each other as we're talking,
9 and just recognize that, again, someone may not agree with
10 you and that's okay. I'm not going to say right or wrong.
11 Just because I may ask a question or I may acknowledge,
12 oh, okay, I understand, don't put more into it other than,
13 again, me just trying to understand the bigger picture.
14 I've had a couple people say, well, you say you
15 understood, which meant you agree. That's not my role.
16 My role is to take a good, comprehensive look at
17 everything from that perspective. And I think with that,
18 I'll stop there.

19 Shawn, you can help me out, or if there's questions on
20 just the process, clarification, something I said that
21 didn't resonate with folks, please feel free to speak up.
22 And that can be from anybody, it doesn't even have to be
23 just from the objectors or interested persons at this
24 point, because we have a lot of the public that's just
25 sitting in that may not be an objector or interested

1 person that are going to be listening. So if you just
2 have a question on the process or how we're going to be
3 moving through the day, I'll open it up now, if that works
4 for you, Shawn, to help me see hands, either physical or
5 virtual, on that part of it.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you so much, Leanne,
7 for that overview of the day.

8 And I would invite any questions or clarification
9 issues that people would seek at this point. You can
10 either raise your hand virtually or, if you want to turn
11 on your computer screen and video, we can actually see
12 your hand in person. So either way works.

13 I've also got just a couple of other slides I'm going
14 to show here to help us get set up for success today,
15 including an overview of today's agenda.

16 So any technical questions? Anything needing
17 clarification? I'll just wait for a minute to see if
18 anything comes up.

19 Okay. Well, good.

20 Well, thanks so much for that overview, Leanne. I
21 thought that was a really helpful overview of the entire
22 objection process, and then some specifics about today
23 that were really helpful.

24 Timory, did you want to add something?

25 MS. PEEL: I'm wondering -- We have some

1 organizations that have multiple representatives on the
2 call, and I'm wondering if they could identify who the
3 lead objector is, and possibly in your zoom box. That
4 would be helpful for us. Thanks.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

6 So for folks that are joining us from the same
7 organization, it sounds like it would be helpful for folks
8 to know who the lead objector is on behalf of your
9 organization. So perhaps your name in the zoom box should
10 read your first name, last name, and then before you get
11 to your organization name, so we can see it, just say
12 "Primary Objector" or "Principal Objector," and then your
13 organization name.

14 Al, did you have a question for us?

15 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: No. I was just getting set
16 up here. Thanks.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Sounds good.

18 well, I appreciate it too. I was going to invite
19 anyone who wants to have their video screen on when we're
20 doing just these introductory pieces or providing general
21 information, you're welcome to. It's sometimes nice for
22 Leanne and Sara and I to have an audience.

23 So good to see you, Al. And John, good to see your
24 face this morning too.

25 When we turn to the individual topical areas starting

1 at 10 o'clock, so we're going to start with general
2 access, motorized and mechanized suitability, for example,
3 at that point, we'll ask people who are an objector or
4 interested party to turn your videos on so that we can see
5 all of you and engage with everyone in real time as though
6 we're in the same room. It's just really nice to be able
7 to see people's names and faces. We would ask members of
8 the public or those who are just listening in to remain
9 off video. And that just helps with us understanding who
10 is an objector or who is an interested party for that
11 topic.

12 As we think about the day ahead here, I do have just a
13 couple of slides. These are very similar to what I shared
14 yesterday. So for those of you that were here yesterday,
15 these will look really familiar. But just wanted to go
16 over a couple of things as we get started today. If I
17 turn this into full screen, maybe that will be easier to
18 see.

19 So just a cover slide here. Just a repeat of the
20 contact information elements that were shared in the chat
21 box and a reminder that if you would rename yourself by
22 hovering over the three dots in your Zoom box, that would
23 be helpful. Again here, if you need it, we have Chiara's
24 contact information, as well as Cody's and Timory's.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And Shawn, we're not able

1 to see your slide.

2 MR. JOHNSON: I see that it went off here for a
3 second. Let me see if I can get it started again, guys.
4 Thank you for that. Well, I'm going to have to stop it.
5 The fun of Zoom; right?

6 Are you seeing the ground rules slide now?

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Looks good. Yep.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. All right.

9 So just a reminder as we get started here. Leanne
10 went over a lot of this, but the focus of today really is
11 on building some shared understanding around some of these
12 key issues and different pieces within the plan that you
13 all have identified for additional conversation, something
14 that you see that could use another look by the team and
15 by the regional forester. So we really are looking to
16 understand those points of view and those different
17 perspectives and just invite all of you to really listen
18 carefully to one another and respect those different
19 points of view.

20 Again, the focus is on understanding, and so
21 you'll hear a lot of questions today. Leanne did a really
22 nice job saying that those questions are really framed
23 around understanding the issues and really thinking about
24 how to look at them from those different perspectives.

25 speaking clearly and slowly will be really important

1 for all of us as we're plugging in from our homes and our
2 offices remotely today. Again, it's really helpful for
3 Cheryl as well, as she's transcribing our conversation.

4 And just in that same vein that we are joining and
5 that the technology doesn't always work, as I've just
6 demonstrated, I'd just ask one another to be patient and
7 forgiving. A lot of us are working from home and have
8 different distractions that are taking us out of our
9 normal routine.

10 Once we get to the different subject matter areas
11 here, as I mentioned, it is nice to have everyone who is
12 an objector and interested party be on video. And the
13 first time you talk, I'll ask you all to introduce
14 yourselves at the beginning. Please slowly and clearly
15 provide your first name, your last name, your affiliation,
16 and your hometown if you'd like. It would be nice to know
17 where people are calling in from or zooming in from. And
18 if your name has a complicated or unusual spelling, it
19 might be nice for Cheryl if you would spell that for the
20 record.

21 In terms of the overall objectives for these meetings,
22 Leanne, again, did a nice job talking about what these
23 are. But it's that chance for you all to bring forward
24 the select topics of interest and to have a conversation
25 with Leanne, the reviewing officer. At the beginning of

1 each of the sessions, she'll do a good job of kind of
2 providing a high-level overview of what that issue is
3 about and provide some guiding questions to really get to
4 some of the key issues and key questions that she has, and
5 then we'll open it up to a general conversation.

6 we'll have an opportunity to really clarify and
7 validate her understanding of what those key issues are,
8 and for you to provide additional information or context
9 would be helpful. we've also got the interdisciplinary
10 planning team on standby to help provide additional
11 clarity or context or share maps or that kind of thing if
12 needed.

13 There's a chance to discuss possible solutions, which
14 I think is one of the great benefits of having this
15 meeting. we can explore potential resolution options for
16 the objections that are brought forward and really bring
17 those forward in a way where everyone can build towards
18 some sort of potential resolution.

19 And then we also want to just check in on the process
20 as a whole and make sure that everyone is leaving today
21 with a clear understanding of what comes next. So
22 throughout today, you'll hear, at the conclusion of each
23 session, what some of the key takeaways are and what will
24 come next in the review process and how everything will be
25 documented as we move forward.

1 And that brings us to our agenda for today. So we
2 started early here at 9 o'clock just to give everyone this
3 overview of the day and of the process in general. We'll
4 take a quick break here, if we have some extra time, and
5 then start back up at 10 o'clock on the topic of general
6 access, including motorized and mechanized suitability.

7 We'll take an hour for that conversation. At
8 11 o'clock, we'll take a break for 30 minutes and come
9 back with our conversation on recommended wilderness areas
10 and boundary adjustments. That will be another hour of
11 conversation. At 12:30, we'll take a lunch break for an
12 hour. And we'll conclude the day with an hour on
13 designated area management, including Badger-Two Medicine,
14 the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit, and the Continental
15 Divide National Scenic Trail. As we did yesterday, we'll
16 round out the day with a summary of key takeaways and a
17 few statements or sentiments on how we're capturing the
18 conversation and what comes next.

19 As Leanne mentioned, we're going to hold true to these
20 times, because some people will be plugging in just for
21 the conversation on a particular topic. For those that
22 are joining throughout the day, I will leave the Zoom link
23 open, and so you're welcome to just hit your Mute Audio
24 and your Mute Video buttons and leave the window open, if
25 you'd like, or just revisit the link throughout the day.

1 So that's a quick overview of all the details in front
2 of us and hopefully setting us up for success for another
3 good day of conversation today. Any other questions
4 before we get started -- I guess before we move to a quick
5 break, actually?

6 Leanne, did I...

7 MS. MARTEN: No, you just froze for a minute, so
8 I wasn't sure if you were still with us. Shawn?

9 There he is. Can you hear me now, Shawn?

10 MR. JOHNSON: I can now. I got booted off.
11 Hopefully you guys were all on there okay.

12 MS. MARTEN: Yes, we were. I didn't see any
13 hands or hear anything, so I think we're okay if we break
14 and then we start right on time at 10 o'clock.

15 MR. JOHNSON: That sounds great. And as I
16 mentioned -- I don't know when I got booted off there, but
17 if people just want to stay on this link, you can simply
18 mute yourself and turn off your video. And then we'll
19 start back up at 10:00 a.m.

20 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. And Cody and Timory will be
21 available, folks, if you have technical difficulties or
22 questions between now and 10:00. Their numbers are posted
23 there in the Chat, and they're happy to help out.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks so much for catching
25 me, Leanne, on that technical issue. I always wonder

1 what's going to happen, and it's great to have a team
2 behind me. Thank you.

3 (Off the record briefly.)

4 MR. JOHNSON: All right. It's 10 o'clock. Good
5 morning again, everyone. A couple of new people have
6 joined, so welcome to today's objection meeting. My name
7 is Shawn Johnson. I'm with the University of Montana, and
8 I'm helping the Forest Service facilitate today's meeting.
9 Glad to have you here and joining us.

10 Our next topic is going to be on the issue of and
11 general access, including motorized and mechanized
12 suitability. And so I'd invite both Leanne and Sara, who
13 are going to be listening to the objections today, as well
14 as anyone who is an objector or interested party on this
15 topic, to go ahead and turn on your video at this time.
16 And we'll have a chance to check in with each of you and
17 ask each of you to introduce yourself shortly. That will
18 make sure that everyone's audio and video equipment is
19 working and we can all hear one another.

20 Again, as we get started, the focus today is really on
21 building some shared understanding around your issues and
22 providing the regional forester with an opportunity to
23 engage with you on some questions that she has that are
24 really aimed at seeking some additional clarity. She'll
25 also be looking for opportunities to resolve some of the

1 objections. And so all of you are invited to be a part of
2 those conversations around what might be done to address
3 those objections as we move forward.

4 I'd just really ask everyone to listen carefully to
5 one another, to respect each other's points of view, and
6 to speak clearly and slowly so that everyone can hear and
7 be heard. That will also help Cheryl, our court reporter,
8 who is providing a transcript of today's conversation.

9 We have about an hour for this conversation, and so I
10 don't want to delay getting started. As soon as I invite
11 each of you to introduce yourself, I'll then invite Leanne
12 to share a few opening remarks and to kick off the
13 conversation.

14 There's quite a few people on this one, so let's go
15 ahead and jump in. I'm going to just ask everyone to
16 introduce themselves according to where you're appearing
17 on my Zoom screen. And Brian Ash, you're first up here,
18 so please share your name and your affiliation.

19 MR. ASH: Good morning. Can you hear me?

20 MR. JOHNSON: Good sounds, Brian.

21 MR. ASH: Yeah. My name is Brian Ash. My wife
22 and I own a parcel of land just on the south side of
23 Strawberry Butte. And I guess a couple years ago, right
24 after we bought the land, some neighbors told us about,
25 what is it, the Strawberry Butte Front Country Trail

1 System and you're expanding the system. And I guess I'm
2 worried about what that might bring into our area. And I
3 don't know if you want --

4 MR. JOHNSON: No. Thanks, Brian.

5 MR. ASH: I could talk more than that, but that's
6 who I am.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Brian. I'm just wanting
8 everyone to introduce themselves with just their name and
9 their affiliation, or your situation as a landowner is
10 really helpful to hear just as we get started.

11 In part, I just want to make sure that everyone can be
12 heard and that your audio and visual are working. So
13 let's quickly do that, and then I'll invite Leanne to
14 actually navigate us through the content of the
15 conversation.

16 But thanks, Brian.

17 MR. ASH: Thank you.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Deb O'Neill.

19 MS. O'NEILL: Hi. I'm Deb O'Neill with Fish,
20 wildlife & Parks. I'm the policy specialist for the
21 director's office. And if I may just go to Adam Grove,
22 since he's with me as well here as an interested party.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. Thanks, Deb.

24 Adam.

25 MR. GROVE: Adam Grove. I'm the area wildlife

1 biologist in Townsend. I cover the Elkhorns geographic
2 area.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning. Thanks, Adam.

4 Al Christophersen.

5 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Good morning.

6 Al Christophersen. I'm cochair of what used to be the
7 Elkhorn Restoration Committee when we filed our comments;
8 I'm now cochair for the Big Elk Divide Restoration
9 Committee.

10 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Al.

11 Zach Angstead.

12 MR. ANGSTEAD: My name is Zach Angstead. I'm the
13 central Montana field director for the Montana wilderness
14 Association out of Great Falls. Thanks.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Zach.

16 Sarah Lundstrum.

17 MS. LUNDSTRUM: I'm Sarah Lundstrum. I work for
18 the National Parks Conservation Association up in
19 Whitefish, Montana, and I'm the Glacier program manager.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Sarah.

21 Someone signed in as Lionberger. I'm not sure what
22 your first name is there.

23 MS. LIONBERGER: This is Sherri Lionberger, and
24 when I signed the objection, I was the president for the
25 local Last Chance Backcountry Horsemen. I'm now the

1 current state chair for Backcountry Horsemen in Montana.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Welcome, Sherri.

3 MS. LIONBERGER: Thank you.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Blake.

5 MR. BUSSE: Hi. Blake Busse with The Pew
6 Charitable Trusts, U.S. Public Lands and Rivers
7 Conservation Program.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

9 Kendall Flint.

10 MR. FLINT: I'm Kendall Flint. I live just
11 outside of East Glacier. My back yard is the
12 Badger-Two Medicine. I'm a private landholder.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Kendall. You're a little
14 bit spotty today. We may ask you to turn your video off
15 at times if you're not coming through clearly. Can you
16 hear us okay?

17 MR. FLINT: I can.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thanks, Kendall.

19 John Gatchell.

20 MR. GATCHELL: I'm John Gatchell. I'm also with
21 the Montana Wilderness Association. Zach is the lead for
22 MWA, but I'm here as the lead objector also for the
23 Montana High Divide Trails Collaborative Group.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, John.

25 Lisa Bay.

1 MS. BAY: My name is Lisa Bay. I was one of the
2 original signatories on behalf of the Helena Outdoor Club
3 for the High Divide Trails Agreement 2007 with the Forest.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Lisa.
5 Eric Clewis.

6 MR. CLEWIS: Hey, I'm Eric Clewis. I'm the
7 western Montana field coordinator for the Montana wildlife
8 Federation.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Eric. And like yesterday,
10 you're a little muffled, so we're going to ask you to
11 speak slowly and clearly when you're talking. Thanks.

12 MR. CLEWIS: All right.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Peter Metcalf.

14 MR. METCALF: Good morning. My name is
15 Peter Metcalf, and I am the executive director of Glacier-
16 Two Medicine Alliance, based in East Glacier, Montana.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Peter.
18 Hilary Eisen.

19 MS. EISEN: Hi. I'm Hilary Eisen. I'm the
20 policy director for winter wildlands Alliance, based in
21 Bozeman, and an interested party today.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Hilary.
23 Gordon.

24 MR. WHIRRY: I'm Gordon Whirry in Great Falls
25 with the Montana wilderness Association.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Gordon.

2 Mike Anderson.

3 MR. ANDERSON: Hello. Mike Anderson, senior
4 policy analyst for the wilderness Society, and I am based
5 in Edmunds, Washington.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Mike.

7 Dave Colavito.

8 MR. COLAVITO: Yeah, hi. Dave Colavito, you got
9 it right. I don't have a fancy title, but I am a member
10 of Montana Wilderness Association, and I'm here
11 representing my lonesome self.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you for joining us,
13 Dave.

14 MR. COLAVITO: If it matters, I'm in the Catskill
15 Region in New York State.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Oh. Wow. Great.

17 Sarah Corse.

18 MS. CORSE: Hi. My name is Sarah Corse, and my
19 husband and I have a house in East Glacier and we sit on
20 the edge of the Badger.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Sarah.

22 Jordan Reeves.

23 MR. REEVES: Good morning. I'm Jordan Reeves
24 with the wilderness Society. I'm the lead objector for
25 the wilderness Society, but I'm wearing two hats today. I

1 also sit on the Upper Blackfoot Working Group, a
2 collaborative group based in Lincoln, Montana. And
3 Karen Good, our lead objector, had her computer crash this
4 morning, conveniently, so she can't be here, so I'm going
5 to represent that collaborative as best I can, and I'm
6 going to ask Mike Anderson and Jennifer Ferenstein from
7 the Wilderness Society, who are also on the call, to field
8 some questions as appropriate. So thank you. And I'm in
9 Bozeman, if I didn't say that.

10 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Jordan.

11 Mark Good.

12 MR. GOOD: I'm Mark Good. I live in Great Falls,
13 and I am a member of the Montana Wilderness Association.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Mark.

15 Jennifer Ferenstein.

16 MS. FERENSTEIN: Hi. I'm Jen Ferenstein. I'm in
17 Missoula, and I work for the Wilderness Society and am
18 participating as one of the people that wrote the
19 objection. And I'm specifically interested in the
20 Badger-Two Medicine area.

21 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thank you, Jennifer.

22 Bonnie Rice.

23 MS. RICE: Good morning, everyone. I'm
24 Bonnie Rice, senior campaign representative for the
25 Sierra Club's our wild America campaign in the

1 Greater Yellowstone and Northern Rockies regions, and I'm
2 based in Bozeman.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Bonnie.

4 Tom Partin.

5 MR. PARTIN: Good morning. Tom Partin. I'm with
6 the American Forest Resource Council. We represent the
7 forest products industry in the five western states, and
8 we have several members in Montana. Thank you.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Tom.

10 The next person has just signed in as Randy.

11 MR. GRAY: Hi. I'm Randy Gray from Great Falls.
12 I'm a retired lawyer here. I was a three-term mayor of
13 the City of Great Falls. I also run green in my blood.
14 During my college and law school summers, I packed and
15 swore at mules on a trail crew through the Bob Marshall.
16 I have literally spent two years of my life in the
17 Bob Marshall. My principal area of interest in this issue
18 the Badger Two-Medicine.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Randy.

20 And Jeff Bradley.

21 MR. BRADLEY: Hi. Jeff Bradley. I have an
22 objection of my own, and I also am a member of the Montana
23 Bicycle Guild. And as this meeting is being held during
24 regular business hours and most of our members have day
25 jobs, I'll be trying to represent that as well and will do

1 my best to differentiate comments.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

3 Anyone just joining by phone that's not on video that
4 we need to say hi to?

5 MR. EHNES: Russ Ehnes here from Great Falls,
6 Bike Riders.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Russ.

8 MR. KERR: Rick Kerr from Choteau.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Rick. Thanks for
10 joining.

11 Anyone else?

12 MR. LORENZO: Yeah. This is Bryan Lorenzo,
13 Montana Logging Association.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Bryan.

15 And anyone else?

16 Okay. So we've got a big group this morning. And
17 just a reminder that because we've got so many people, we
18 do want to give priority to those who are the objectors on
19 this issue, and so we ask that those people be given
20 priority opportunity to speak with the regional forester
21 this morning. If you'd like to raise your hand, we'll be
22 looking for people who are actually physically raising
23 their hands on the video screen.

24 If you'd like to raise a virtual hand, you can do that
25 by finding the Raise Hand button under the Participants

1 window. If you click Participants, it will give you the
2 Raise Hand button at the bottom there. We'll be looking
3 there as well. If you're calling in, you can use star 6
4 to mute and unmute yourself and star 9 to raise and lower
5 your hand. Those are both toggles.

6 Any questions before I turn it over to Leanne?

7 Awesome.

8 Leanne, the floor is yours.

9 MS. MARTEN: Great. Hey, thank you, everyone.
10 Really appreciate everyone taking time out of your busy
11 day to join us. Welcome back to those of you that were on
12 yesterday, and welcome to those just joining us this
13 morning.

14 I am going to do my best here over the next 55 minutes
15 or so on this topic to keep us focused, and understanding
16 that this bleeds into the other agenda topics for today.
17 And so with this one this morning, what I'm really trying
18 to key into is getting a greater understanding from all of
19 you -- Not a repeat of your written objections, because we
20 have those and read them, and I'm going to summarize kind
21 of the spectrum of what I read and heard. There may be
22 some nuances I've missed, and, if so, I need your help on
23 clarifying my understanding. And then I have some
24 questions.

25 The tricky part here is obviously the number of people

1 and trying to help facilitate that between Shawn and
2 myself. We'll do our best to make sure we get the voices
3 in the room. And it's also really keying into -- this
4 morning is talking about general access and the motorized/
5 mechanized suitability issue.

6 We will have, later today, discussions on proposed
7 boundary adjustments in both recommended wilderness and
8 wilderness -- or, excuse me, recommended wilderness areas,
9 as well as some of the other areas I know some of you
10 mentioned are very near and dear to your heart,
11 Badger-Two Medicine, Elkhorns, Continental Divide Trail,
12 and some of those other special areas.

13 So I'd ask, as best we can, it's really looking at
14 suitability of motorized and mechanized, not getting into
15 really that you agree or disagree where a boundary
16 adjustment may have been proposed. We'll have time to
17 talk about that a little bit later in the agenda, but they
18 bleed some, so we'll do what we can here as best we can.

19 With the motorized and mechanized suitability topic,
20 as you guys can imagine -- And many of you know each other
21 very well. I've had the privilege of working with most of
22 you. Some of you I haven't necessarily met face-to-face,
23 so it's nice to meet you at least via camera. I'll look
24 forward to the face-to-face opportunity here hopefully in
25 the near future.

1 The spectrum has come out. We have anything from some
2 who expressed interest that they don't want to have any
3 mechanized or motorized use in certain areas on the
4 forest, some have expressed that they want enhanced or
5 more mechanized and motorized use allowed across the
6 Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, and we had a
7 little bit of everything in between. We also have some
8 folks that feel that, as proposed, we're not adhering to
9 current administration direction on improving and
10 increasing access to public lands.

11 So we had a little bit of everything on this one, but
12 we also had proposed remedies. And so what I would like
13 to focus in on, and I need help with clarification, and
14 I'll get into teasing out some questions, is really
15 looking at any proposed remedies or your thoughts on if we
16 looked at some of the proposed remedies, concerns,
17 thoughts. Not really looking at the either/or; really
18 trying to figure out how we can try best to allow
19 everybody the opportunity to enjoy and use your public
20 lands in the way that you would like to. That doesn't
21 mean everybody is going to be able to do it in every place
22 across the Helena-Lewis and Clark, and we recognize that.
23 But we also don't want to negate opportunities if there's
24 some opportunities out there that we're missing, to take a
25 look at this issue.

1 So I'm going to start off with a couple questions and
2 then just try and get the dialogue going, and we'll go
3 from there. And Shawn, as he mentioned, will help me see
4 physical hands as well as computer hands. Via on the
5 phone, I think, Shawn, you said it's star 9 if you're
6 calling in would be the computerized hand, and then for on
7 the Zoom, if you're on the screen, if you go down, and I
8 think it's the Participants list, see your name, you can
9 hit the Raise Hand, for those of you that didn't hear that
10 at the beginning of today.

11 So let me jump in here. One of the remedies was
12 talking about motorized and mechanized use and really
13 wanting to change some of the areas on where it may or may
14 not be allowed. And I'm just going to jump into the
15 elephant in the room for many of you, and the passion and
16 dedication, not in specific on the areas, but as
17 recommended wilderness. And for those of you that I know
18 have been and worked in this region, lived here in Montana
19 or come and enjoyed it, there's a history with recommended
20 wilderness and motorized and mechanized use of recommended
21 wilderness throughout the Northern Region. And some of
22 that definitely predates me, and I am fully aware of that
23 history, as are I think everybody probably on this call
24 this morning.

25 So I don't need a repeat of the history. What I

1 really am looking at is what you're really thinking about,
2 if there's specific areas or uses that you have a lot of
3 concern about. I read through some objectors' concern
4 about potentially user conflict of mountain bikes and
5 equestrian use, and other than saying one can or cannot do
6 it, I'm looking for some help on if there's some other
7 proposed remedies that you guys are thinking about that
8 would help minimize, mitigate potential user conflicts in
9 areas. So I'm hoping you guys can help me with that.

10 I'm going to pause there and see what folks are
11 thinking along those lines. When you're thinking about
12 motorized/mechanized use in these areas, granted, some of
13 you would say your preference is don't have any mechanized
14 use, don't have any motorized use, or vice versa, but is
15 there a middle ground? Is there something out there that
16 would at least help alleviate some of the real concerns on
17 why you're leaning one way or the other?

18 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks. Your question is prompting
19 a lot of responses already, Leanne. So we've got three
20 hands raised virtually. Let's start with those three.
21 The order I saw them in is the order we'll take them.

22 So Dave Colavito, you'll start, and then over to
23 John Gatchell, and then Zach Angstead.

24 So Dave, do you want to kick this off?

25 MR. COLAVITO: Yeah. Well, first, thanks for

1 having this. I appreciate the opportunity, not living
2 around the corner. But I had a question on clarification.

3 MS. MARTEN: Sure.

4 MR. COLAVITO: I was just curious as to what, if
5 any, deference -- I didn't see or hear anybody from the
6 Blackfeet representing their position here, particularly
7 in the Badger-Two Medicine. What deference, if any, does
8 the Forest intend on giving to those cultural values? If
9 you could just clarify that for me, I'd appreciate that.

10 MS. MARTEN: Sure. I'll do my best.

11 And Sara, help me out here. There's Sara on screen.
12 I'm trying to keep screens here.

13 So I would say, Dave, great question. And when it
14 comes to deference or not deference, I'm going to answer a
15 little bit different than maybe that terminology. We have
16 to take into account, and we do take into account very
17 seriously the cultural significance of various aspects
18 across the Helena-Lewis and Clark. Badger-Two Medicine is
19 one area that we're fully aware of, working very closely
20 with the Blackfeet Tribal Nation on the significance there
21 to that Nation.

22 But that's not unusual with a lot of other places
23 across the forest and other Tribal Nations as well. So
24 that is all part of the thought process, and that is all
25 part of the decisionmaking process that Forest

1 Supervisor Avey goes through from that. We have a
2 government-to-government responsibility to consult with
3 other nations, and so that all ties into it. Whether or
4 not there's a deference, I can't really use that
5 terminology because there's so many other variables that
6 play into it, including working with the Tribal Nations
7 from that standpoint and working with their councils and
8 working with tribal members along those lines.

9 So it's not that if they say this, it's automatic one
10 way or the other. What I can tell you is it's extremely
11 important, it's definitely part of the process, and it's a
12 responsibility that we take very seriously.

13 Sara, I'm going to pause there. Is there anything
14 there you would like to add? Because I know you and
15 Bill Avey have been working extremely closely, not only
16 with the Blackfeet but with all the tribes.

17 MS. MAYBEN: No, I think you did a good job of
18 capturing it.

19 We have good working relationships with all our tribes
20 that we consult with and that are within the boundaries or
21 have interest in the Helena-Lewis and Clark. So yes, we
22 are taking into consideration their issues, their
23 concerns. And I think Leanne captured it well.

24 MS. MARTEN: So hopefully that clarifies it a
25 little bit, Dave, from that standpoint.

1 MR. COLAVITO: I appreciate that.

2 MS. MARTEN: You bet. You bet.

3 Go ahead, Shawn. I'm going to let you help
4 facilitate, because you can see hands. I can't.

5 MR. JOHNSON: No, happy to. We've got
6 John Gatchell up first, and then just so people know that
7 I'm seeing hands, Zach Angstead, Randy Gray, and Lisa Bay
8 following John.

9 MR. GATCHELL: First of all, Leanne, to address
10 your question about recommended wilderness, I'm going to
11 speak for Montana High Divide Trails Collaborative Group,
12 which was formed and met with Tom Tidwell when he was in
13 your shoes. We have worked cooperatively with Backcountry
14 Horsemen, Land Trusts, the Mountain Bike Clubs of Butte
15 and Helena. We have worked on a collaborative plan that
16 includes a recommended wilderness in Little Blackfoot,
17 Nevada Mountain, Scapegoat, and in the Big Belts, most of
18 the recommended wilderness in the draft plan.

19 So we agree not only that there are opportunities for
20 mountain biking outside of recommended wilderness, but
21 we're working to enhance those by specific agreement;
22 right now, working to provide an alternative route for
23 mountain bikers that we call the Kading-Cliff Mountain,
24 which adjoins the recommended wilderness, but is in the
25 adjoining roadless area, and we have great partners that

1 are working together. And we have another model similarly
2 to provide opportunities on the Lincoln Ranger District.
3 And I think that that possibility certainly exists in the
4 Big Snowies. And none of these areas that are recommended
5 are open to motorized use currently.

6 So I think that, you know, we have a collaborative
7 group, and I hope you'll take a good look at what we
8 suggest. Because we are working together. We're raising
9 money to help provide enhanced recreation opportunities
10 and maintaining dialogue between users so that, you know,
11 we can all benefit from our public lands. So I don't
12 think there's a great conflict with recommended
13 wilderness.

14 Our collaborative has existed since 2007. We have
15 agreements on this forest plan, not on every part of this
16 forest plan, but specifically for the Divide and
17 Upper Blackfoot and the Big Belts geographic areas. And
18 in those, we agree on specific recommended wilderness and
19 other areas that will be available as backcountry that is
20 available to mountain biking as well as other uses.

21 MS. MARTEN: So John, let me tease it out just a
22 little bit there. And if not you, then others maybe can
23 be thinking about this. So what I hear you saying is it's
24 not an either/or; it's really trying to have the wide
25 diversity of uses across the forest and recognizing that

1 there may be some areas that previously had the ability,
2 but if those no longer have the ability, say, for mountain
3 biking, it's not just too bad, it's where else can we
4 enhance the ability so folks have that spectrum of riding
5 experiences, different challenge levels, and the different
6 parts of it. Just thinking mountain bikes right now.

7 But it's really trying to work collaboratively on
8 where we could have hopefully a spectrum of opportunities,
9 even if the areas may change in the proposed plan and
10 decision.

11 MR. GATCHELL: Yes. Exactly. And we discussed
12 those specifically so that we're -- you know, it's not my
13 idea. We're working in some cases with the Backcountry
14 Horsemen. In other cases, the mountain bikers are
15 bringing those ideas to the table. And when we reach
16 consensus, then we make those as joint recommendations, as
17 we have in these geographic areas.

18 So right now, we're working on the Kading project.
19 The Montana Bicycle Guild, Jeff is on the call, is the
20 primary recipient of trail funding, but we're all working
21 cooperatively to provide that opportunity and make it
22 happen. We have another suggestion on the Lincoln Ranger
23 District for a connecting trail from Stemple Pass to
24 Lincoln that will similarly allow -- you know, it allows
25 the bike community to be supportive of recommended

1 wilderness that maintains its wilderness potential for the
2 future, and, at the same time, we provide excellent
3 opportunities for mountain biking by working
4 collaboratively.

5 MS. MARTEN: Okay. And at this time, it sounds
6 like you are not seeing anything in the forest plan at
7 least being proposed right now that negates those types of
8 continued partnerships, site-specific projects, and areas
9 to be able to work through?

10 MR. GATCHELL: No. There are other -- We don't
11 have an agreement that covers the forest, so there's
12 areas you're going to hear different points of view from
13 us --

14 MS. MARTEN: Yes.

15 MR. GATCHELL: But I'm personally convinced that
16 the opportunities exist with a creative approach.

17 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Very helpful. Thank
18 you, John.

19 I think Zach was next, Shawn?

20 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. And we've got a good lineup
21 of people here. I know we don't have a ton of time. If
22 people could just really focus on some of the key issues
23 or respond directly to Leanne's concerns. We'd like to
24 hear as many voices as possible.

25 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yep. I'll be brief.

1 So I think it's important to realize, building on
2 John's point, that in the forest plan, 5 percent of the
3 forest would be recommended wilderness. Of course, you
4 know, a bit more of that is designated wilderness. But
5 there's plenty of opportunity on the forest for mountain
6 bikers, for motorized users and different users.

7 I think it's also important to realize, if you look at
8 the Custer Gallatin -- I know that's not in this, but
9 there are areas that were recommended wilderness in the
10 19, I can't say, but the '80s plan for the Gallatin that
11 mountain bike use was allowed to occur. And in this most
12 current forest plan for the Custer Gallatin, those areas
13 were removed because of entrenched mountain biker use.
14 And it's important to realize that if we're going to
15 protect these areas for future designation, we have to
16 take the steps necessary to make sure they're available
17 for designation in the future. So thank you.

18 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Zach.

19 And the one thing I would ask folks -- And I'm okay if
20 the main use is mountain bikes and the mechanized use
21 there. But if there's other motorized/mechanized use that
22 you want to make sure I'm thinking of, please interject
23 that as well.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Leanne and Zach,
25 for bringing that forward.

1 Randy Gray, you're next.

2 MR. GRAY: Leanne, thanks very much. I join
3 Dave's comments about your hosting these events. It's
4 just amazing how this technology allows what we're doing
5 right now to occur. So thanks.

6 I'm concerned about the mechanized use in the
7 Badger-Two Medicine. I'm a horse guy, I also pack my own
8 stock, and I'm also a backpacker. And I'm telling you,
9 those mountain bikes are just plain dangerous. The
10 Forest Service has, as you know, been sued for
11 inappropriate snowmobile signage when two snowmobiles
12 collide, and there's concern liability-wise I think from
13 the Agency on this.

14 This last summer, my wife and I were backpacking over
15 in the Jewel Basin area over there on the Flathead, and
16 holy mackerel, we almost got run over on a blind corner by
17 some mountain bikers coming through. And I'm not saying
18 they're all young men that are drinking too much beer, but
19 it's a pretty good bet that some of them are.

20 You know, the wilderness Act has never been
21 interpreted to mean all uses in all places -- or, excuse
22 me, the multiple-use concept. And I think things like
23 John Gatchell is talking about here, finding appropriate
24 areas for mountain bikes is fine. That also gives other
25 users the idea that maybe they shouldn't be going there if

1 they don't want to risk having their pack string run into
2 by horses. So I think there are alternative ways to come
3 to a solution, but I think generally in the
4 Badger-Two Medicine, mechanized use should not be allowed.

5 You know, the other concept is that in wildness, it's
6 not just space, it's time. It's a four-dimension concept.
7 And when you can travel, you know, at the speed of a walk
8 or a horse walking, that's a far different experience than
9 you can travel at a 20-mile-an-hour bike speed. That
10 speed shrinks the area, and I think that's a concept
11 philosophically that the Agency is well aware of and
12 should honor. Thanks.

13 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Randy.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Leanne, should we just listen to
15 some additional voices here or do you want to respond to
16 any of this?

17 MS. MARTEN: Let's get some other voices in the
18 room, Shawn, and go from there.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Terrific.

20 I'm going to check with who I have in the queue, and
21 if I've missed anyone, let's grab your name real quick.
22 So I've got Lisa Bay, then Al Christophersen,
23 Jeff Bradley, Bonnie Gray, Peter Metcalf, Kendall Flint,
24 Sarah Lundstrum. Have I missed anyone?

25 Oh, Bonnie Rice. Sorry. I don't know why I put

1 "Bonnie Gray." Bonnie Rice.

2 Lisa, you're up next.

3 MS. BAY: Hi, everyone. I was an original
4 participant in 2007, building on what John Gatchell and
5 Zach Angstead have mentioned, to a long-discussed and
6 collaborative effort to try to figure out how to protect
7 the Little Blackfoot Meadows area and proposed wilderness
8 area. And we came up with a great solution, which was
9 that there would be circumnavigating trails around that
10 proposed wilderness area so that we could reduce the
11 conflicts between mechanized use and, in particular, horse
12 use, but also hikers. We all agreed.

13 We've since, as multiple user groups, gone out and
14 cooperatively built these trails around the recommended
15 wilderness. The groups include bikers, hikers, horseback
16 users. And it's been a good experience, and it's been
17 collaborative. My concern is that it's been 13 years
18 since we signed that agreement. The trails are -- I think
19 the trails are completed. And I'm concerned that the plan
20 now says we're going to wait another three years in order
21 to write a travel plan that would remove mechanized use
22 from the area, when, in fact, the solution that you're
23 seeking -- You've asked what kind of solutions could we
24 come up with.

25 The solution is actually embedded in the agreement.

1 The agreement has been met, and now it's time to just go
2 forward immediately and remove mechanized use from this
3 recommended wilderness area in the Blackfoot, and frankly,
4 as Zach said, from other areas so that we retain the
5 wilderness qualities that allow them to go forward as
6 wilderness. Thanks very much for your time.

7 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Lisa. That was another
8 question I was going to work in. And others, if you have
9 input. I saw, with some of the proposed remedies, less
10 than three years or doing it immediately. So you just
11 helped put a lot of context on what you were looking at on
12 that comment. So that was very helpful. Thank you.

13 MS. BAY: Thanks, Leanne.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Lisa.

15 Al Christophersen.

16 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Good morning. Thanks for
17 having the session again today. Two things.

18 One is the national recreation opportunity spectrum,
19 the basic underlying building block for recreation and
20 recreation recognition on the forest, no longer has a
21 recognition of any areas that don't include mechanized
22 use, even the primitive, all six of them. So across the
23 forest, in support of those places that have that
24 primitive experience, I think there needs to be a
25 recognition that you can take the mechanized recognition

1 out of that in specific areas. You have that ability. So
2 we would just ask that you look at that opportunity.

3 Secondly, the core of the Elkhorn wildlife Management
4 Unit -- now, this is a wildlife management unit
5 specifically designated in the original go-around of the
6 forest plans. So now we have to look at that -- it ties
7 back to the recreation opportunity spectrum of where
8 mechanized use is allowed. The core area of the Elkhorns
9 that was the original, long-time-ago wilderness proposal
10 is now being opened up for mechanized use.

11 We think that that area needs to be -- you can't put
12 it off. In three years, if you put it off for travel plan
13 decisions, we've watched how especially the mechanized use
14 has grown. Already, part of the Elkhorns has been
15 reallocated to that kind of use. Not that it doesn't
16 belong in places, but this is a wildlife management unit,
17 and that kind of use affects the basic core of what the
18 Elkhorns are all about. So we have to be very, very
19 careful. And I think that we need to look at how we deal
20 with it, especially in this core area. And we've given
21 you our recommendations for that.

22 The other thing I'll tell you is Joe Cohenour, with
23 the Elkhorn Working Group, could not be on today and he
24 asked me to speak for them. Our comments are similar,
25 just so you know that. Okay?

1 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Al. I appreciate that.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks for your comments, Al.

3 Jeff Bradley.

4 MR. BRADLEY: Thanks. I think in other regions,
5 we've seen where wilderness has been designated from areas
6 that have had mechanized use in the past, so I point to
7 the white Clouds as an example of that. I hate the word
8 "mechanized" because it's bicycles we're talking about.
9 We're not talking about an automobile or something that is
10 powered from an external power source. Even a horse is a
11 bicycle. Someone gets on it, puts their calories into
12 turning pedals, making it go forward and working it.

13 I ride in backcountry areas as well as front country
14 areas. People do ride differently in those areas. I live
15 in Helena, and when I'm riding a trail in Helena, there
16 are certain features, particularly the new directional
17 trails, that I know that I can approach with a certain
18 attitude. When I'm in a backcountry area, I ride in such
19 a way that, you know, if there is anything that could
20 possibly be outside of my sight line, I know that I can
21 stop and control myself. I think there perhaps is some
22 confusion over the level of control that occurs there. As
23 Randy pointed out, Jewel Basin, that is already foot
24 traffic only, no horses, and those areas do exist on some
25 forests.

1 You know, I think enhancing areas is fine. Working
2 towards reroutes and opportunities outside of wilderness
3 areas is a big plus. I think when some of the
4 White Clouds went into place, we saw some of that in the
5 plan that was drawn up by Congress.

6 From a personal standpoint -- again, I'm trying to
7 differentiate when I'm making comments -- recommended
8 wilderness areas should not go beyond their administrative
9 purpose, which is to recommend areas for Congress to
10 designate. They should not be making administrative
11 de facto wilderness, which I know is something the
12 Forest Service doesn't like to hear, doesn't like that
13 concept. But I think that by excluding certain uses, they
14 are de facto making those areas a certain thing. I would
15 recommend that everyone on the call, if they have issues
16 that they think Congress should take up, they should move
17 those wilderness areas forward in Congress, and it should
18 not be an administrative responsibility.

19 I have also heard a lot about some of the conflict
20 that's gone on. I understand some people don't like the
21 feeling. I think we need to be careful when we talk about
22 feelings and likes and dislikes. Land should be open to
23 all multiple uses. And I think for me, one of the most
24 disturbing things that occurs when we do have areas that
25 go into recommended wilderness are the lack of

1 connectivity for non-motorized users, such as myself, when
2 you're trying to get that backcountry experience, whether
3 it's a loop or a through trail. For instance, the
4 Nevada Creek RWA, if that goes into place, there is no way
5 to go from Lincoln to Helena, and that's unfortunate.

6 So those are things that I think that the
7 Forest Service should consider. Hopefully collaboratives,
8 as they work, can consider how to work those in and, as
9 they are working, can also think about funding and
10 actually getting some of these things in place as they go
11 and maintaining them. Thanks.

12 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Jeff. Appreciate it.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thanks, Jeff.

14 We're starting to have a nice assortment here of both
15 areas of agreement and some good potential remedies and
16 also seeing some of the different perspectives out there,
17 so it's a good conversation.

18 Bonnie Rice, would you like to share your thoughts?

19 MS. RICE: Yes. Thanks. I wanted to bring up
20 from our objection not so much the conflict between human
21 users in terms of motorized and mechanized, but conflicts
22 between wildlife, specifically grizzly bears, and
23 mechanized and motorized uses.

24 So I think we all know that there's been an increasing
25 number of conflicts between grizzly bears and mountain

1 bikers in particular, and so that's of great concern to
2 us, you know, that those types of users can go faster and
3 farther than hikers or horse riders, for example. And I
4 think, really, there just aren't that many places that
5 grizzly bears can be, and other wildlife. There's a lot
6 of other places that motorized and mechanized users can
7 use on the forest.

8 I think, as the former grizzly bear recovery
9 coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service --
10 Chris Servheen is the coordinator for decades for grizzly
11 bear recovery. And, you know, just from statements from
12 him in terms of recognizing this fact that, you know, some
13 uses can go a lot farther and faster and are more prone to
14 conflicts with grizzly bears specifically.

15 And so, you know, given the small amount of
16 recommended wilderness that the Forest is recommending in
17 the final plan and that Zach mentioned, you know, we
18 really don't believe that these uses are appropriate in
19 recommended wilderness, specifically considering the
20 conflicts with wildlife, and specifically with grizzly
21 bears. Some uses just have larger impacts. And there was
22 just a study released from Canada earlier this month that
23 was specifically looking at the impacts of different types
24 of recreation on wildlife, grizzly bears being one of the
25 species that they looked at.

1 And so, you know, considering there aren't a lot of
2 places that these wide-ranging species can be, and
3 considering the importance of this forest for connectivity
4 for grizzly bears and other species between the NCDE and
5 the GYE, we really feel like recommended wilderness should
6 not include those uses, nor should the primitive ROS
7 classification. Thank you.

8 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Bonnie. And you bring up a
9 good point, as does everybody. It's definitely not one or
10 the other. There's a lot of variables that enter into
11 this issue for folks; wildlife, human, experiences,
12 values, all of that. So thank you.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Bonnie.

14 Peter Metcalf.

15 MR. METCALF: Hi. My name is Peter Metcalf, and
16 I'm the executive director of Glacier-Two Medicine
17 Alliance. And I would like to first echo Bonnie and Al
18 and Randy's comments. We do share some of those concerns.
19 But I want to address my concerns directly to the
20 suitability of mountain bikes in the Badger-Two Medicine
21 area. And specifically, we believe the Forest Service
22 erred when it chose not to make a non-suitability
23 determination for the appropriateness of mechanized travel
24 in the Badger-Two Medicine and would like to see the
25 Forest make that determination in its final plan and

1 record of decision that would be forthcoming.

2 MS. MARTEN: Peter, can I ask you a question on
3 that real quick?

4 MR. METCALF: Please.

5 MS. MARTEN: From the standpoint of do you feel
6 like there was something missing in the analysis or the
7 conclusion you don't feel is -- you can't connect the dots
8 on the analysis and what was disclosed, how we came to
9 that conclusion?

10 MR. METCALF: Correct on both those accounts,
11 Leanne, I would say.

12 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

13 MR. METCALF: I'd say both. That the conclusion
14 erred because the Forest Service, at least in the record
15 of decision, the responsible official relied on faulty
16 reasoning to come to that conclusion in terms of
17 suggesting that previous analysis had been conducted
18 regarding the suitability of mountain bikes. But the
19 administrative record is clear that the previous analysis
20 only looked at motorized travel in the travel management
21 plan. So there's faulty reasoning there that either needs
22 to be corrected and revealed to the public to show how the
23 Forest Service conducted that analysis.

24 But also, the Forest has an obligation under
25 Section 106. Because the area is designated as a

1 traditional cultural district, there's an obligation both
2 to the tribe and to the public to ensure that any of these
3 sorts of uses don't pose an adverse effect. And both the
4 Blackfeet in their comments and our group and others have
5 identified that as a concern. The Forest Service has not
6 documented that it actually has either conducted that
7 analysis or referred to its previous analysis that it did
8 conduct regarding oil and gas drilling that would help
9 lead it to -- that it could rely on to make that
10 non-suitability determination as well.

11 So we would like to see the Forest take those steps
12 and then follow up with initiating the appropriate steps
13 to close the area to mountain bikes.

14 MS. MARTEN: Great. Very helpful. Thank you.
15 That helps explain what you were referring to there.

16 MR. METCALF: Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely.

17 And then additionally, we think it's also, you know,
18 an error, that the appropriate time to make that
19 suitability determination is at the plan stage and not
20 push it off to some sort of future travel management
21 decision and that it's actually misunderstood the NEPA
22 process in terms of how travel management plans are
23 supposed to tier off of the forest plan. And by referring
24 to the travel plan to provide direction, the existing
25 travel plan, they've inverted that relationship. We'd

1 like to see that corrected.

2 Finally, I'd like to comment that I think it's the
3 appropriate time for the Forest to consider doing this,
4 both because it was brought to their attention during the
5 planning process, and that would be consistent with the
6 Forest Service handbook directives on suitability
7 determinations, and because mountain biking, by all
8 agreement, is a very limited use at this time in the
9 Badger-Two Medicine. And so it's appropriate to get out
10 and make a suitability determination prior to the use
11 becoming well-established and having to deal with more
12 entrenched constituents. And whether that's suitable or
13 not suitable, the Forest Service needs to make that
14 determination now. So that's what we'd like to see you
15 do.

16 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Peter. Very
17 helpful.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Peter.

19 Kendall Flint.

20 MR. FLINT: Thank you. Again, I live outside of
21 East Glacier on the border of the Badger-Two Medicine. Am
22 I audible? Maybe my connection isn't good.

23 MS. MARTEN: You're a little in and out, Kendall.
24 So far so good, but you may want to turn off your video
25 just to help with the audio.

1 MR. FLINT: All right. I'll turn off my video.

2 I will say that as a physician since '92 at the
3 Blackfeet Community Hospital, I always have to think in
4 terms of health and medicine, and on my screen, I see you
5 all are closer than six feet apart.

6 Anyway, in more seriousness, I want to echo and then
7 expand upon comments that Randy Gray and also
8 Peter Metcalf and others made. Based on my experience, I
9 want to tell you that there is virtually no motorized or
10 mechanized travel in the Badger-Two Medicine right now,
11 and really hasn't been. Of course, since the 2009 travel
12 plan, there's been no permitted motorized use, but there's
13 also no mechanized use either. There's no travel plan
14 prohibition against mechanized use.

15 The Blackfeet Tribe and the Blackfeet Tribal Historic
16 Preservation Office have both asked that people respect
17 their wishes that there be no mechanized use in the
18 Badger-Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District. And
19 based on my own time, which is extensive, in the
20 Badger-Two Medicine since 1992, I can tell you there
21 really is no mechanized use, and there never has been.

22 There are sporadic exceptions. I'm embarrassed to
23 confess that I rode my bike in the Badger-Two Medicine
24 around 1998. I apologize. And I know Allen Gill did
25 something similar around 1994. I wouldn't do it again.

1 And I hope that that gets excluded in the reconciliation
2 process.

3 I'm in the Badger-Two Medicine at least weekly, in the
4 north most typically, but also off the Heart Butte
5 cut-across and also down in the southern and high peaks
6 regions, and I want to say again there is no mechanized
7 use to speak of in the Badger-Two Medicine. And that
8 leads me to think that there shouldn't be, especially in
9 the context of the traditional cultural district and the
10 ecosystem and wildland values that are so important in the
11 Badger-Two Medicine.

12 There are, I think fortunately, options for mechanized
13 as well as motorized use nearby. Bald Butte is a couple
14 miles away. The Tribal Timber Reserve is very close.
15 Challenge Creek and Skyland Road options exist. If there
16 ever is an increased local demand for mechanized travel in
17 the Badger-Two Medicine or in this area, which there
18 isn't, I think there are other options that could be
19 explored. That's the end of my comment.

20 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Kendall. And just
21 so you know, you were loud and clear when your video
22 wasn't on, so appreciate on that.

23 MR. FLINT: Thank you.

24 MS. MARTEN: Please feel free to turn it back on
25 if you want.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Kendall.

2 We've got three more in the lineup, and looking at the
3 time here, Leanne, I'm wondering if you would be willing
4 to go a little over the hour, if we need to, just to round
5 out the conversation.

6 MS. MARTEN: You bet. I'm happy to. I want to
7 honor other folks's time, though, too. So by all means,
8 if you're on a tight time frame, let Shawn know so we make
9 sure we get your voice in if you have to leave right at
10 the top of the hour.

11 MR. JOHNSON: So we've got Sarah Lundstrum,
12 Mike Anderson, and Dave Mari in the lineup, and then
13 whoever else might want to comment.

14 So Sarah.

15 MS. LUNDSTRUM: Thank you. Sarah Lundstrum. I
16 work for the National Parks Conservation Association. And
17 I'll echo everything that Peter said. He made the
18 argument for me, so I will keep my comments shorter.

19 The other thing I wanted to talk about in the Badger
20 is -- and while we do have a travel plan from 2009 that
21 does not allow for motorized travel in there, it feels
22 like because of the quality of the traditional cultural
23 district, having the forest plan reflect that so that if
24 there is a future travel plan that comes around again,
25 motorized use is not suitable in the Badger, that the

1 forest plan actually says that. So beyond just the
2 mechanized piece, the unsuitability for mechanized, you
3 know, we made the point that it should also be
4 non-suitable for motorized use. So that if in the future
5 there is a new travel plan that comes up, the forest plan
6 reflects sort of protecting the values of the traditional
7 cultural district.

8 MS. MARTEN: So really, Sarah, what I hear from
9 you is clarifying the intent there under the traditional
10 cultural designation and what that really means --

11 MS. LUNDSTRUM: Correct.

12 MS. MARTEN: -- versus leaving -- what you're
13 interpreting, and Peter, I'm seeing you nod, a few others,
14 it's not clear now, and so it's left up to have multiple,
15 potentially multiple interpretations what's really meant.

16 MS. LUNDSTRUM: Right. Yeah.

17 MS. MARTEN: Perfect. That helps. Thank you,
18 Sarah, very much.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Sarah.

20 Mike Anderson.

21 MR. ANDERSON: Thanks. And good to see you,
22 Leanne, again.

23 MS. MARTEN: Hey, Mike.

24 MR. ANDERSON: I just want to expand a bit on
25 comments that we heard from Al and from Lisa earlier.

1 Al pointed out that the Helena-Lewis and Clark plan relies
2 upon a supposed national policy of which mountain biking
3 is automatically considered to be suitable in all
4 primitive areas outside of designated wilderness unless
5 otherwise specified. And that's a real concern for the
6 Wilderness Society. By the way, I'm with the Wilderness
7 Society. That sets a disturbing national precedent which
8 we don't think is really appropriate.

9 we don't think that the guidance that the plan refers
10 to with regards to the ROS handbook actually says that and
11 that -- you know, I think that the appropriate way to
12 handle this, except for the Badger-Two Medicine, which
13 clearly should be considered off-limits to mountain biking
14 as a primitive area, but for other areas, we just don't
15 need to make that call right now. We can defer that to
16 future travel planning.

17 You know, the 2012 planning rule does not require that
18 all uses be determined to be suitable or non-suitable, and
19 in this situation, we think it's inappropriate for the
20 Helena-Lewis and Clark to automatically say that all
21 primitive areas are suitable for mountain bike use. So we
22 would suggest that a good remedy for that is simply to
23 remove that part of the plan.

24 And regarding Lisa's point regarding the three-year
25 waiting period, we really agree that that is too long.

1 And she points out a situation where it's really already
2 been too long and that the Forest Service does have the
3 option of making a concurrent decision on the recommended
4 wilderness mountain bike use or there could be a temporary
5 closure that accompanies the final decision. Thank you.

6 MS. MARTEN: So Mike, just to clarify, make sure
7 I'm hearing part of what you said accurately, when you're
8 referring to the recreation opportunity spectrum or the
9 ROS and that handbook, you don't read the handbook as
10 saying the definition of primitive includes allowing
11 mechanized and motorized uses.

12 MR. ANDERSON: It's certainly not mandated. And
13 mountain biking is only specified for the semi-primitive,
14 non-motorized class of ROS, and it's not mentioned really
15 in the primitive category.

16 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So if we're interpreting it
17 that way, then there's -- you know, how are we gaining
18 that interpretation for primitive? Gotcha. Thank you.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Good. Thank you, Mike.

20 We've got Dave Mari, who is one of our phone callers
21 coming in.

22 Dave, if you want to unmute yourself.

23 MR. MARI: Okay. I think I'm unmuted now. Can
24 you hear me?

25 MS. MARTEN: Yeah, I can hear you, Dave, loud and

1 clear.

2 MR. MARI: Okay. Thanks. Nobody has
3 addressed -- I'm from Lewistown, by the way. I'm not
4 speaking for the Montana Wilderness Association, but I am
5 a member, and I wanted to talk specifically about the
6 Snowies.

7 Your recommendation now is to really reduce the size
8 of the Big Snowies Recommended Wilderness Area and
9 allocate a portion to the Grandview Recreation Emphasis
10 Area. I'd like to see you add back some of that western
11 portion of the Snowies WSA that you're proposing to
12 include in that recreation area.

13 The proposal for recommended wilderness deletes some
14 of the most popular hiking areas in the Snowies, such as
15 Crystal Cascades and the ice caves. There's a loop trail
16 that goes around the headwaters of the Rock Creek
17 watershed above Crystal Lake. The eastern part of that
18 loop trail is really steep, and I don't think very many --
19 most mountain bikers probably wind up pushing their bike
20 uphill in these steep spots. And in addition, some of the
21 proposed boundaries that you've suggested, for example, up
22 on the crest of the Snowies, are right out in the middle
23 on top of the range. So it's not a very particularly
24 manageable boundary.

25 For myself, I would support including the western part

1 of that loop trail that leads up to Grandview and all of
2 the adjacent areas west of there in the Snowies as part of
3 that Grandview Recreation Emphasis Area. There's a lot
4 of -- a number of wilderness advocates who are also
5 mountain bikers, and I think there's an opportunity to
6 collaborate with the mountain biking community to develop
7 some really good biking areas in that western part of the
8 Snowies, but retain the eastern part in the recommended
9 wilderness area.

10 MS. MARTEN: So Dave, part of what I hear you
11 saying, and we'll able to -- I don't know if you'll be
12 able to join us. We'll be able to talk a little bit more
13 about the actual boundary and some of what you describe,
14 we can have a visual on screen with the trails.

15 But thinking about what I hear you saying is, you
16 know, trying to keep it, I'll just say, as clean as
17 possible; that if we have an area that's recommended
18 wilderness, that does not include mechanized/motorized
19 use, and so if we have areas that have heavy use with that
20 or want to keep loop trails, that we don't have that
21 included in recommended wilderness areas is the
22 preference. It may not be able to be that clean every
23 place. But that's what I'm hearing, I believe?

24 MR. MARI: Well, I'm advocating adding back some
25 of that area that you are proposing to delete, and, like I

1 say, the mountain biking area could be well-developed on
2 that western part that includes --

3 MS. MARTEN: Gotcha.

4 MR. MARI: -- western part of that Grandview
5 Trail. It's hard to talk about without having a map.

6 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. And when we get to that, if
7 you're able to join us, Dave, on the boundary discussion
8 here, I think that's actually next, starting at 11:30,
9 we'll have a map up on that part. But I hear what you're
10 saying. That helped clarify.

11 MR. MARI: Okay. I don't have video, so I'm not
12 going to be able to really understand --

13 MS. MARTEN: Fair enough. But the trail numbers
14 help with a map on that part. Thank you. Very helpful.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Dave. Appreciate
16 you joining.

17 I've got two hands raised on the screen, and then we
18 do want to check in to see if there's anyone else on the
19 phone. So we'll go to Hilary, Adam, and then check in on
20 the phone.

21 Hilary Eisen.

22 MS. EISEN: Thank you. I wanted to mostly just
23 support a lot of what I've heard today. I especially
24 agree with the points made by Mike Anderson,
25 Peter Metcalf, Zach Angstead. Winter wildlands Alliance

1 shares many of the same thoughts that they did.

2 I just wanted to add to the discussion a little bit.
3 Early in this hour's discussion, somebody mentioned, you
4 know, that these nonconforming uses can become established
5 in recommended wilderness areas if they're not sort of
6 addressed in the forest plan in a proactive way. And
7 we've seen that -- I think a lot of the discussions are on
8 mechanized use, but as an organization focused on winter,
9 this is an issue that we see all the time with
10 snowmobiling. And making sure that recommended wilderness
11 areas are not suitable for snowmobiling is important to my
12 organization, because we think that in order to maintain
13 that wilderness character, that's a really essential
14 piece.

15 And then the other thing I wanted to add, you know,
16 Mike mentioned your ability to make concurrent decisions
17 in this forest plan, specifically in regards to closing
18 those areas that aren't suitable for uses where that
19 suitability has changed. And Leanne, this is something
20 you and I discussed in the Flathead forest plan revision
21 process, and we really appreciate that the Flathead, after
22 that objection meeting, they did set a timeline for making
23 those decisions. But we're coming up on three years now
24 and we haven't seen any movement at all from the Flathead
25 to, you know, close the areas that are not suitable for

1 various uses or to designate the places that are suitable.

2 And as we try to learn from every new forest planning
3 process, my recommendation is that, you know, for places
4 that you're closing, that you're going from a suitable use
5 to a not suitable use, I believe that it's important to
6 make a concurrent decision with the forest plan to close
7 those areas. I understand that you need to go through
8 travel management planning to designate the newly suitable
9 places, to designate use within newly suitable areas. But
10 where you're closing an area, you don't need to go through
11 travel management planning to do that, and you can
12 actually do a concurrent decision and gain those
13 protections that many, many people have advocated for over
14 the course of the forest plan revision.

15 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Hilary. And don't worry.
16 We haven't forgotten about the Flathead.

17 MS. EISEN: Neither have we.

18 MS. MARTEN: I know. You and many others.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Hilary.

20 Adam Grove.

21 MR. GROVE: Yeah. As an interested party,
22 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks supports the Elkhorn
23 Working Group's and Elkhorn Restoration Committee's stance
24 that the core area of the Elkhorns should be deemed
25 unsuitable for mechanized use given the Elkhorn geographic

1 area's uniqueness is being designated as a wildlife
2 management unit. While limited, there is some body of
3 research that indicates that mountain bikes do have a
4 negative impact on elk. While less than motorized
5 impacts, it is more than, you know, other non-motorized
6 uses, such as hiking and horseback riding and such. So
7 again, as an interested party, Montana Fish, wildlife &
8 Parks does support ERC's and EWG's position. Thanks.

9 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thank you.

10 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Adam.

11 Are there any objectors that just phoned in that
12 haven't had a chance to speak?

13 MS. MARTEN: Shawn, I do see Clint Loomis has his
14 hand up.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Oh. Clint's on, and then I saw
16 Brian just raised his hand too. So we've got a couple
17 more here.

18 Clint Loomis.

19 MR. LOOMIS: So I'll keep this very short,
20 because I'm an objector on boundaries. But one of the
21 conversations -- I'm from Lewistown. I'm an MWA member.
22 One of the conversations that keeps circling around is
23 what is the Forest Service going to do with the e-bike,
24 and I haven't heard anybody talking about e-bikes as far
25 as their designation.

1 I understand that it's going to be considered
2 motorized. However, that's a tough one to enforce. And
3 so is there an enforceability going to happen with this
4 new technology? How is the Forest Service going to handle
5 the e-bike issue? Thank you. I'll get off.

6 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Clint. That's a great
7 question. And I know we just had some proposed rules hit
8 the Federal Register as the Agency on e-bikes. But I hear
9 the question and the need to at least address them in the
10 Helena-Lewis and Clark revision or something in the record
11 of decision or something so we don't leave it open-ended.
12 And new technology is also what I heard; not just e-bikes,
13 but other technology that we can't even imagine yet. So
14 appreciate that.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Clint.

16 Brian Ash.

17 MR. ASH: Yeah, it sounds like this is my time to
18 have my word.

19 MS. MARTEN: Yep.

20 MR. ASH: Just like some of the other
21 participants, the Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit is a
22 special -- you know, special area. It's not just any
23 other Forest Service lands. And so when I see the plans
24 to expand the mechanized trail system there -- you know,
25 the proposal mentioned that in the existing trail system,

1 there was trouble with too many unauthorized trails being
2 developed by users, and yet they think that expanding the
3 trail system -- I mean, to me, that sounds like that's
4 just going to lead to even more unauthorized trail uses.

5 I guess that's my main concern. The Elkhorns are a
6 special area, and I don't think expanded use for bicycle
7 traffic helps that. Also, as a landowner there, a big
8 concern of mine is potential for wildfire. I know in the
9 Forest Service lands around my property, there is a lot of
10 dead and downed timber there, and I just worry that if it
11 lights, if or when, it's going to be a very destructive
12 fire.

13 So that's my two cents, and I'll mute myself and keep
14 listening.

15 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Brian. I appreciate it.

16 I don't know if we have another hand, Shawn, but I do
17 have a question on one -- I haven't heard the perspective,
18 if somebody wants to share anything today from equestrian
19 users or people who are thinking from the equestrian
20 standpoint? Obviously, we have your objections, so that's
21 okay, don't feel obligated, but I just want to make sure
22 I'm not missing something from equestrian. We've talked
23 motorized, mechanized, hiking. We can't cover all of
24 them, but I wanted to put that out there.

25 MR. JOHNSON: I see a hand from Sherri

1 Lionberger.

2 If you would like to weigh in, Sherri, go ahead.

3 MS. LIONBERGER: Yes. Thank you. Hello, Leanne.
4 The reason I really didn't speak up is everything that I
5 have to cover really has been covered by others, and I
6 know we're short of time, so I didn't want to just
7 reiterate everything. But pretty much in lockstep with
8 the primitive recreation class should just not
9 automatically include mechanized. There should be a
10 primitive class, we feel very strongly, that is the old
11 traditional foot-and-horse traffic throughout, and not
12 just for recommended wilderness. There is other primitive
13 areas that we feel that that should be applied to.

14 And the objection that we filed also included that
15 emphasis on the Tizer Basin and the core area in the
16 Elkhorns being very important for wildlife and to maintain
17 it as a foot-and-equestrian use only. So just so you hear
18 the voice and know that we are in lockstep with that, I
19 didn't have anything else. But thank you.

20 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Sherri. I appreciate that.

21 MS. LIONBERGER: You bet.

22 MR. JOHNSON: And I know we are trying to wind
23 things up here in a little bit and respect people's time,
24 but I see Al just put his hand back up.

25 so do you have another quick comment for us, Al, on

1 this topic?

2 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes. Just that, you know,
3 we have equestrian people in our collaborative, and they
4 are extremely concerned that they are basically being
5 relegated to find their own quiet spot someplace, with the
6 way that the ROS is coming out. And, you know, they have
7 significant conflict issues. Certainly willing to work
8 with people, but they're looking for that place under the
9 primitive or the ROS that mechanized is limited.

10 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Thank you.

11 First of all, just a big thank you to everyone, and I
12 appreciate folks who got their voice in the room. I know
13 many of you are representing multiple groups, and for
14 those that are doing groups and personal, you did a great
15 job distinguishing when you were talking for whom, so
16 that's very helpful and we really appreciate that.

17 There's a couple of things that I'm hearing. You
18 know, obviously, we have a whole spectrum of interest out
19 there, and this has helped me a lot, just listening to you
20 and, through your words, answering some of the questions.
21 Thank you for your patience on that in trying to put some
22 context.

23 I'm hearing a lot around the recreation opportunity
24 spectrum, and I read that in objections as well,
25 particularly the primitive and how it is defined

1 nationally and how we've looked at the definition. I'm
2 hearing that some don't agree that what we interpreted is
3 accurate as well.

4 And what I'm interpreting into some of that, between
5 the written and the verbal, is that even if you see the
6 definition, you're not seeing -- some of you are not
7 seeing how we have plan components or guidelines or
8 standards that, even if it's not the ROS, are addressing
9 your concerns on that part of it. So, you know, how have
10 we connected those dots, is it too seemingly black-and-
11 white, an either/or, or we may be able to have some in
12 between in some of the areas that you've mentioned and
13 some of these special areas on that.

14 I've heard across the board -- I haven't heard anybody
15 say they're totally against multiple use and multiple ways
16 to recreate and enjoy your land. Where you do it and at
17 what level we're able to put that on across the Helena-
18 Lewis and Clark is more where folks are coming from. It's
19 not that we're anti-bicycle use or anti-equestrian or OHVs
20 or any of that. It's respecting that we all have
21 different ways we like to enjoy our public lands, but we
22 can't do it everyplace, everywhere, so how do we balance
23 that? And there are ideas on how to potentially do that
24 or look at it around some of these areas.

25 As we're talking about -- hearing a little bit about

1 the proposed boundary adjustments that were part of the
2 draft decision from Forest Supervisor Avey, for those of
3 you that can see it, we'll have a map up to show. Some of
4 the remedies were very specific to a couple trails, and so
5 I'm going to key in and try and tease some of that out.
6 Dave brought a little bit of that up, but so did some of
7 you, without using trail numbers.

8 Because the other thing I'm going to need some help
9 with is when folks are referring to core areas, what I'm
10 thinking of as core area may not be what you're thinking
11 of, and, you know, even just make sure we aren't talking
12 past each other. So all of this will start tying into
13 some of the future discussions.

14 But regardless of the area, the really basic question
15 and the real basic tension that I'm hearing is how we did
16 or did not come to the conclusions, and disagreement with
17 some of them, but also, even if we stay as is, we need to
18 connect the dots a little closer and be able to explain
19 why and what we used as our foundation. And if there's
20 areas where we can balance it out differently, there's
21 opportunities in proposed remedies that you guys brought
22 forward for us to take into consideration.

23 So you guys know I'm not going to make a decision, but
24 all of this will help me as I'm formulating my response to
25 Forest Supervisor Avey to all of your objections on just

1 the suitability of motorized versus mechanized, bicycle
2 use, and how that will play into it from that standpoint.
3 So thank you. I know in some ways, you wish you could get
4 an answer, but I'll be honest, I have to have time to
5 think through all of this. If there was an easy answer,
6 we'd all have it figured out by now, right, on that part
7 of it. But thank you. Extremely helpful.

8 I know many of you, if not all of you, will be joining
9 us here I think in about ten minutes. And I appreciate
10 you guys staying on a little bit longer, those that could
11 from that standpoint. But how about if we -- we'll take a
12 break here until 11:30, and then we'll be back on at
13 11:30 to talk on the agenda topic. We may have some new
14 folks join us on that, so we'll be watching for that as
15 well, and we'll jump right in again.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Leanne.

17 Let's take a quick break. I know we did run over, so
18 thanks to everyone for being as efficient with the time as
19 possible. There's just a lot to share here. We'll
20 reconvene at 11:30 on the topic of recommended wilderness
21 areas, boundary adjustments. So we'll see you back at
22 11:30. Thank you.

23 * * * * *

24

25

1 RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS AREAS AND BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

2 Tuesday, September 30, 2020, 11:30 a.m. - 12:55 p.m.

3
4 A P P E A R A N C E S

5 FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

6 FOREST SERVICE:

7 LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer

8 SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor

9 DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader

10 LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist

11 SCOTT NAGEL, watersheds

12 WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist

13 AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist

14 KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds

15 ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses

16 LIZ SMITH, writer/editor

17 JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff

18 CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist

19 TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner

20 CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

21 OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

22 OBJECTORS/INTERESTED PERSONS PREVIOUSLY INTRODUCED

23 CAMILLE CONSOLVO, Great Falls

24 SARA BULEY, Great Falls

25 ANDY JOHNSON, Independent miner

HENRY HUDSON, Montana wilderness Association

CHARLEY KARINEN

26 OBJECTORS/INTERESTED PERSONS PREVIOUSLY INTRODUCED WITH
27 COMMENTS ON THIS TOPIC:

28 JOHN GATCHELL, MT High Divide Trails Collaborative

29 JORDAN REEVES, Upper Blackfoot Collaborative

30 JEFF BRADLEY, Montana Bicycle Guild

31 ZACH ANGSTEAD, Montana Wilderness Association

32 CLINT LOOMIS, Montana Wilderness Association

33 BRYAN LORENZO, Montana Logging Association

34 TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council

35 MARK GOOD, Montana Wilderness Association

36 RANDY GRAY, Badger-Two Medicine

37 BONNIE RICE, Sierra Club

38 RICK KERR, Choteau

39 ** NOTE: (Inaudible) denotes inability to distinguish
40 words due to technology

1 MR. JOHNSON: welcome back. It's 11:30, so we'll
2 go ahead and get started. Welcome back to those, I guess,
3 who have been with us all morning, and hello and welcome
4 to people who are just joining us now for this
5 11:30 conversation on recommended wilderness areas and
6 boundary adjustments.

7 Just to reiterate a couple of things, I've put an
8 update in the chat. So if people want to read that, just
9 click on the chat feature at the bottom of your screen.

10 Just a reminder for everyone who is able to go ahead
11 and rename themselves with their first name, last name,
12 and organization by clicking on the three dots in the
13 upper right-hand corner of your square on the Zoom screen.
14 That will just help us know who you are and if you have an
15 organizational affiliation. If you don't, that's fine
16 too. You could just say "Interested Party." For those
17 who are the lead objector, so you are a part of an
18 organization who has multiple objectors on this issue, if
19 you could go ahead and put "Lead Objector" right after
20 your name, that would be helpful as well.

21 We've also got a contact there for any members of the
22 press who may be joining us today. We'd invite you to get
23 in touch with Chiara, and her contact information is in
24 the chat.

25 And then if anyone is encountering technical issues

1 today -- we know that the technology can be a challenge at
2 times -- please contact either Cody or Timory, and their
3 information is provided in the Chat as well.

4 so far, things seem to be working really well. so
5 thank you, everyone, for following our basic ground rules.
6 Just to reiterate what those are, we're really trying to
7 seek understanding today on your objections and on your
8 concerns for the plan as it currently stands and to engage
9 in conversation with both Leanne Marten, the regional
10 forester, and Sara Mayben, the deputy forest supervisor
11 for the Helena-Lewis and Clark, who are with us here
12 today. And to do that, just to make sure that we continue
13 to show a lot of respect for one another and to recognize
14 that we're really listening for understanding, and so to
15 build in time and space for that and to just be respectful
16 of one another. Part of that is speaking clearly and
17 slowly so that we can hear one another and that our court
18 reporter can capture our conversation as well.

19 I'd like to go ahead and invite everyone who is an
20 objector or an interested party for this 11:30 topic on
21 recommended wilderness areas to go ahead and turn on your
22 video screen so that we can see you. This just helps us
23 see you and engage in conversation more easily in this
24 space. We invite people who are just joining by phone to
25 participate as well. You unmute yourself by phone by

1 hitting star 6. It's a toggle. And we'll be watching for
2 that too. Those that are just joining by phone and want
3 to raise their hand when we get to the question-and-answer
4 period, you can raise your hand by hitting start 9, and
5 that's a toggle feature as well on your phone.

6 For those that are joining on the Zoom screen and want
7 to raise your hand, you hit the Participants tab at the
8 bottom. That's the fourth button over, it looks like,
9 from the left. Hit that Participants button; it will pop
10 out a new window. At the bottom of that window, there
11 will be a Raise Hand opportunity. That helps me see you
12 and helps Leanne and I navigate the conversation. We'll
13 also be looking for physical hands too, so if we're not
14 paying attention to you, go ahead and wave at us, and
15 we'll be on the lookout for those hands.

16 I'd like to start, as we have been, by doing some
17 introductions. And just given that a lot of you are the
18 same folks who were with us at 10:00 a.m., I'd suggest
19 that maybe we just invite new voices to join us, and then
20 anyone who wants to retest their audio or visual. And
21 then as you talk or as you have questions or engage in
22 conversation, that's a chance to state your name again and
23 be a part of the conversation. That will give us just a
24 little bit more time to dive into the issues.

25 so looking across the list here, new folks who either

1 joined and didn't have a chance to introduce themselves in
2 the first round, it looks like Camille. I think you
3 joined us but maybe weren't there for introductions. Do
4 you want to say hi, please?

5 MS. CONSOLVO: Sure. Camille Consolvo,
6 Great Falls, as an objector, citizen.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Camille.
8 And Sara Buley.

9 MS. BULEY: Yes. I'm Sara Buley, and I live in
10 Great Falls also, and I'm a citizen. Thank you.

11 MR. JOHNSON: All right. I'm not seeing anyone
12 else who wasn't here this morning. Am I missing anyone?

13 MS. MARTEN: Andy Johnson has his hand raised. I
14 don't think he introduced himself, Shawn, earlier.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Oh, that's right. There's Andy,
16 and he's not on video. That's why I kind of missed him.
17 So Andy, please introduce yourself.

18 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Now can you hear me?

19 MR. JOHNSON: Sounds good, Andy.

20 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: I'm Andy Johnson. I'm an
21 independent miner. I've got a few questions on this
22 wilderness stuff.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Glad you could join us.
24 Anyone else?

25 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Do you have a video on me?

1 MR. JOHNSON: We don't have your video working,
2 Andy.

3 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Well, just think of
4 Clark Gable or John Wayne, and I'll pass for that.

5 MS. MARTEN: Great.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Sounds good. And we've got
7 Henry Hudson joining us as well.

8 Henry.

9 MR. HUDSON: Yeah. Hank Hudson, and I'm from
10 Helena, and I'm a citizen and also an MWA member, and I
11 have a short comment.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Henry.

13 Anyone else who is an objector or interested party who
14 has not had a chance to say hi?

15 Okay. Well, let's go ahead and get started, then.
16 I'll turn it over to Leanne and Sara.

17 Leanne.

18 MS. MARTEN: Great. Hey, thank you, everyone,
19 and appreciate everybody taking time out of their busy day
20 to join on this topic. Several of you were on for the
21 last hour-plus, and so thanks for sticking with us in the
22 virtual world here from that standpoint.

23 And the topic we're on now is the recommended
24 wilderness areas and boundary adjustments. There's a
25 couple things I'm going to do here. I'm going to do my

1 best just to summarize some of what I understand from your
2 written objections. And then I really want to spend a lot
3 of time on some of the proposed remedies.

4 To help with that, there's going to be some visuals
5 that I'm going to ask Lori, from the Helena-Lewis and
6 Clark, to put up on the screen. For those of you not able
7 to see them on the screen, I will do my best to at least
8 verbalize if I'm referring to a trail or something along
9 those lines. And as we're having the dialogue, if you
10 guys could help me with that, that would be great.

11 The reason I'm going to have a few visuals on this one
12 is because we're talking boundaries, obviously, and it
13 just helps me visualize the areas you're talking about.
14 If I can just see a map or something visually, it just
15 helps my thought process. I'm not trying to say it helps
16 everybody, but it just helps me to have something visual
17 at times versus just trail numbers from that perspective.

18 And also, to make sure that if we're referring to an
19 area by a name, like a core area, making sure that what
20 I'm thinking of as the core area matches what you're
21 referring to as the core area; like Elkhorn core area, for
22 example. Most of the time it does, but I have had
23 incidents where what I'm thinking and what you may be
24 referring to actually overlap some, but not 100 percent.
25 So just making sure that I'm on page with you there on

1 that.

2 So when it comes to the overall issues that were
3 heard, not a surprise to any of you, I'm sure.

4 Recommended wilderness areas and boundaries, we had the
5 spectrum. Based on Forest Supervisor Avey's proposed
6 decision and the forest plan revision, we had folks that
7 wanted more recommended wilderness, and some of the
8 boundaries that were being proposed for adjusting, say in
9 the Big Snowies, Nevada Creek Mountain area, didn't agree
10 with those adjustments, anywhere from less recommended
11 wilderness areas and more adjustments. And then, of
12 course, uses within the recommended wilderness areas,
13 which is some of what the previous agenda topic discussed,
14 and we shared clarification and thoughts and making sure I
15 understood what folks were saying there.

16 So, you know, there's a whole spectrum. The remedies
17 that were proposed varied also. Some were just very
18 black-and-white, no/yes, on areas on that. And that's
19 really clear to me on what your preference is. We had
20 some real specific remedies on potential dropping, adding
21 some trails in specific areas as well, and that's where I
22 could use some help, on trying to just make sure I'm
23 understanding the context and the thought process behind
24 certain areas along those lines.

25 So what I'd like to do is just -- I'm not going to hit

1 on every recommended wilderness area at this time. I'm
2 going to jump into a few of them. And Lori, I'll cue you
3 in here in a minute on the map I'm thinking would be
4 helpful. And if you guys have something else that pops
5 up, Lori is fantastic, and if we can, we'll adjust or add
6 different layers to a map from that standpoint.

7 Keep in mind some of the special areas that may or may
8 not be part of recommended wilderness areas is an agenda
9 topic after lunch this afternoon, particularly specifics
10 around Continental Divide Trail, Elkhorn area, and the
11 Badger-Two Medicine. I understand it does bleed over into
12 some of these, so I'm not saying don't bring those up, but
13 we do have a time this afternoon to talk specifically
14 about some of those special designated areas and
15 objections and issues and concerns and potential ideas you
16 have on management of those areas specifically as well.

17 so let's jump into -- Lori, if you can help me, I'd
18 like to jump into the Nevada Mountain area real quick.

19 And as she's pulling this up and sharing her screen,
20 what specifically was talked about in the Nevada Mountain
21 Recommended Wilderness Area, there were some questions
22 about mining and what would or wouldn't be allowed. So
23 what I heard through that is a real need to clarify just
24 that; for recommended wilderness areas, where do existing
25 valid rights fit into it, 1872 Mining Law, you know, that

1 complexity, that part of the use of our public lands.

2 So I'm not going to get into the specifics there, but
3 recognizing I do hear and was made aware that there's a
4 need to clarify and there is some confusion on mining
5 activities, recommended wilderness, and what would or
6 wouldn't be allowed from that perspective.

7 specific to a remedy that was proposed with the
8 Nevada Mountain area -- And I'm going to ask a member of
9 the team to correct me if this is wrong of what I'm
10 looking at here. For those that can see the screen, what
11 we have up there, the hashed area, it's purple, but it's
12 the diagonal area and the arrow circling there, is what is
13 the proposed recommended wilderness area in Forest
14 Supervisor Avey's proposed record of decision.

15 The red area, Lori, help me out with that, that's what
16 was part of some of the alternatives, and that was a
17 change between the draft and the final, particularly in
18 the northern area. And I'm trying to think, I don't have
19 the number, but the Helmville-Gould Trail, and we had
20 proposed remedies of decreasing the boundary so the
21 northern part would no longer be part of the recommended
22 wilderness area from that standpoint.

23 what I'm looking for is some clarification on --
24 Because we've heard both spectrums and that people agree
25 or disagree. It seemed like the Helmville-Gould Trail --

1 And hopefully I'm pronouncing that right with the local
2 pronunciations of Gould. I believe it ties back into the
3 use of that trail, and it has use with mechanized and
4 motorized use as well as other parts of it. But I want to
5 make sure I just understand why the desire was to not have
6 that be part of the recommended wilderness area.

7 And Shawn, I cannot see hands at all with the map, and
8 so I'm hoping you can help me.

9 If somebody could just make sure I understand the
10 reasoning there. And then on the flip side, if you have
11 real concerns on this adjustment, I'd like to just hear
12 the main concerns that folks are thinking about by not
13 including this northern part into a recommended wilderness
14 area.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Leanne. Happy to help.
16 And I've got a couple of hands here. John Gatchell first,
17 and then Jordan Reeves.

18 John.

19 MR. GATCHELL: Yeah. Thank you, Shawn and
20 Leanne. First of all, to clarify, the Helmville-Gould
21 Trail and the other trail in the northern area -- Can I
22 point like this?

23 MS. WOLLAN: I do not believe so.

24 MR. GATCHELL: There's no legal motorized use in
25 those areas now following the travel plan.

1 And then secondly, the Montana High Divide Trails
2 Collaborative and other collaboratives now have agreed
3 that the boundary should go north, not all the way to the
4 Poorman Creek Road, which is here, but in between, about
5 like this boundary. Actually, that looks like our
6 proposal.

7 MS. WOLLAN: So the red line is the proposed
8 recommended wilderness boundary that was given to us by
9 the Blackfoot Working Group.

10 MR. GATCHELL: Yeah. Thank you. And the Montana
11 High Divide Trails Collaborative supports that, along with
12 the connecting trail that essentially provides the
13 alternative that loops from Stemple Pass down into
14 Lincoln. It was originally proposed by the IMBA Trail
15 Solutions in 2009 for the Chamber of Commerce in Lincoln.
16 And we support the combination of this more robust
17 wilderness boundary, because this is a very wild area.
18 And there are some reasons, wildland-urban interface and
19 private lands and some mining claims in this area along
20 the Poorman Road. So the boundary was derived to minimize
21 conflicts with other uses and to support the collaborative
22 uses that we all support.

23 And so you know it, the Montana High Divide Trails
24 Collaborative includes the Highlands Cycling Club,
25 Prickly Pear Land Trust, Last Chance Backcountry Horsemen,

1 the Montana Bicycle Guild, the Montana Wilderness
2 Association, and the Helena Trail Runners.

3 MS. MARTEN: So John, help me out. This proposal
4 with the boundary that Lori put up in the red and the
5 trail going north-south, I'm not familiar with that trail
6 that would still be part of it. Is that hiking only?
7 Mechanized/motorized? It doesn't sound like there's
8 currently any mechanized/motorized trail in that northern
9 part at this time. Did I understand you correctly there?

10 MR. GATCHELL: No. There's no motorized trails.

11 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

12 MR. GATCHELL: All the trails in the area are
13 open to mechanized use --

14 MS. MARTEN: Gotcha.

15 MR. GATCHELL: -- wilderness in the old forest
16 plan. But we have a collaborative agreement that would
17 support that as a recommended wilderness with the more
18 robust boundary. And our collaborative has come to total
19 agreement with the Lincoln group. So if there's any
20 confusion, go with the Lincoln boundaries. The Montana
21 High Divide Trails -- you know, we just see the value and
22 we worked out our differences so that we are in full
23 support of the Lincoln collaborative.

24 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Very helpful. Thank
25 you, John.

1 MR. GATCHELL: -- part of roadless country to the
2 northwest that has, that is not included because of mining
3 conflicts and some mining claims.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, John.

5 MS. MARTEN: Very helpful.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Let's go to Jordan Reeves and then
7 Andy Johnson and then back to Leanne.

8 So Jordan.

9 MR. REEVES: Yeah. Hi. Good close-to-afternoon
10 now. I'm Jordan Reeves with the Wilderness Society. I'm
11 wearing, though, right now my hat -- I'm pinch-hitting as
12 the lead objector for the Upper Blackfoot Working Group.
13 Karen Good, who is our lead objector, had a computer crash
14 this morning, so I'm going to do my best to fill her
15 shoes. Karen sits on the Upper Blackfoot Community
16 Council based in Lincoln.

17 And just so folks know, we are a collaborative group.
18 We've been operating for about six years, mostly comprised
19 of residents of Lincoln, community leaders, the fire
20 chief, Zach Muse, outfitters, motorized recreationists,
21 Ponderosa Snow Warriors, mountain bike advocates,
22 et cetera. And the focus of this group has really always
23 been about the community of Lincoln and its relationship
24 to the surrounding national forest and how integral forest
25 management is to community vitality. And really, it's a

1 diverse group of folks. I believe -- I don't want to
2 speak out of turn. I believe it is the largest and
3 perhaps the most diverse collaborative group on this
4 national forest.

5 And the proposal we put forward, which includes this
6 red line boundary here, you know, it doesn't just
7 represent the 14 or so members of our collaborative. It
8 also represents stakeholder outreach we've done over the
9 last six years to more than 200 groups and individuals, a
10 lot of kitchen table conversations. You know, we have the
11 endorsement of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, a lot of
12 main street businesses, and a wide variety of motorized
13 and non-motorized and other recreational and user groups.

14 And like John said, our collaborative, you know, it
15 was really important to us to try to minimize any
16 conflicts with livelihoods. In fact, part of the origin
17 story of the collaborative was really to promote Lincoln's
18 economic vitality through diverse, you know, forest
19 management and recreation opportunities. So we went
20 through and we mapped all the existing mining claims and
21 really tried to limit, if not totally avoid, any conflicts
22 there. And this boundary, in large part, represents that.

23 So I think, to speak to the specific issue of the
24 Helmville-Gould Trail and this boundary, as John
25 mentioned, you know, the travel plan, and a large part of

1 our proposal is based on the travel plan. We did see a
2 few opportunities to enhance recreation that were not, you
3 know, solidified in the travel plan, so we put forward
4 that proposal.

5 But this boundary is a really good example of what we
6 spoke about in the last session of different user groups
7 coming together to try to find -- you know, where we
8 couldn't agree on a specific use for a recommended
9 wilderness area, to try to advance each other's values and
10 alternative scenarios. And so we have proposed -- Because
11 our recommended wilderness boundary would preclude the
12 existing mechanized use -- excuse me, mountain bike use on
13 the Gould-Helmville Trail, we have proposed some alternate
14 trail routes to the north, both for motorized recreation,
15 working together with Russ Ehnes, who I think is on the
16 call today, and for mountain biking. We're working with
17 Eric Grove specifically.

18 And particularly that mountain bike opportunity is
19 really the opportunity identified by the International
20 Mountain Biking Association as the sort of epic, desirable
21 trail in the Lincoln area. And one of Eric's main goals
22 was to have a looped mountain bike system from the
23 community of Lincoln that tied back to the community, sort
24 of thinking that Lincoln could ultimately perhaps become,
25 in some ways, a destination for mountain bikers seeking

1 that opportunity. And that's supported by the community
2 folks as well.

3 so hopefully, that's some helpful background there on
4 that boundary.

5 MS. MARTEN: It does help. One real quick
6 question: where the northern boundary is at, is that a
7 boundary that you could easily find on the ground?

8 MR. REEVES: You know, we worked long and hard.
9 And others might be able to help me here too. You know,
10 the easily identifiable boundary in that area is the road,
11 is Stemple Pass. And we did a lot of outreach to folks up
12 in that area, cabin owners and whatnot, who -- and because
13 of the mining claims, we moved that boundary southward.
14 So I believe as it sits, it's on a section line.

15 MS. WOLLAN: That is correct.

16 MR. REEVES: So, you know, it's just one of those
17 situations, there wasn't an easily identifiable
18 topographic feature, but that boundary represents a lot of
19 consensus among a lot of different folks to advance
20 multiple interests.

21 MS. MARTEN: That helps. Thank you very much,
22 Jordan.

23 I think we have a couple other hands.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, we do. And I want to just
25 make sure that we take them in a good sequence here. So

1 did someone want to clarify that on-the-ground features
2 question that Leanne had? It looked like maybe both John
3 and Clint might have had some information on that. And
4 then I want to make sure we get back to Andy Johnson.

5 John, is that what you were going to speak to?

6 MR. GATCHELL: Yes. Just to add to what Jordan
7 said, it runs on section lines up there. The road would
8 have been more easily defined, but I think the question
9 becomes manageable for what. And when we looked at it,
10 what we left with is there's a substantial buffer to do
11 wildland-urban interface treatments along the road.
12 There's room for -- it avoids the mining claims Jordan
13 mentioned. And the trails, if they are non-mechanized,
14 can easily be managed in that area.

15 So, you know, there are many examples of wilderness in
16 the Northern Region that follow section lines. It's
17 perhaps not the best, but in this case, it is the best
18 solution, and it is manageable.

19 MS. MARTEN: That's helpful. And for those on
20 the phone, Lori just put up the section line map also, so
21 it helps with the visual. So thanks. That does clarify
22 for me.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Clint, was your hand raised on this
24 issue or something else? Something else. So I'll have
25 you in line.

1 And Andy Johnson, would you like to share your
2 comment?

3 Andy, can you hear us?

4 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: I'm muted, Shawn.

5 MR. JOHNSON: I can hear you now.

6 MS. MARTEN: We can hear you, Andy. Go for it.

7 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you. Well, my
8 objection is two-fold. First of all, why are we even
9 talking about Nevada Creek? Because it's a mining area.
10 And I'll read you from the appendix where it says: Active
11 mining in this polygon includes placer plus lode mining.
12 There are a lot of known unpatented claims with
13 preexisting rights.

14 So why is this area even being recommended for
15 wilderness? Because if we go back to the Organic Act of
16 1897, where the Forest Service was formed, it says leave
17 out mineralized areas because they have a higher value, a
18 higher worth.

19 I know you guys are all hopped up about this
20 wilderness area, but according to my figures, in the
21 Helena National Forest, HLC NF, that's 84 percent
22 wilderness. How in the world did we ever get to that
23 point? There's an area down in the Big Belts that I'm
24 interested in. I pointed it out to them that this is an
25 intrusive center, and yet it's recommended for a

1 wilderness area.

2 So at 84 percent, does that leave much else for
3 anything else? Because I think, you know, it's just
4 totally out of hand. When are we going to shut down this
5 wilderness pipeline? Because we've got wilderness areas,
6 designated wilderness areas and recommended wilderness
7 areas and wilderness study areas, each of those three
8 areas, and roadless areas, forgive me, roadless areas take
9 up half of HLC NF. And all of those areas don't
10 (inaudible) timber production and they're just rotting up
11 there. I mean, the forests are a mess. They're a
12 disgrace. I tried to do some soil sampling up in
13 Confederate Gulch over in the Big Belt Mountains. It took
14 me twice as long because of all the downfall. It's just a
15 horrible mess up there.

16 So anyway, my overall objection is this area should
17 never have been recommended for wilderness. I know
18 everybody wants their little piece of wilderness close to
19 their home, but this is getting totally out of hand, in my
20 view.

21 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Andy. I appreciate the
22 interest and the passion, and thanks for sharing. I
23 appreciate that.

24 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Andy.

1 Jeff Bradley, I see your hand is up.

2 MR. BRADLEY: Yes. Thanks. I wanted to point
3 out the importance when it comes to collaborative
4 (inaudible).

5 MS. MARTEN: Jeff, you just went back on mute.
6 There you go.

7 MR. BRADLEY: Yes. You guys muted me.

8 MR. JOHNSON: That was my fault. Sorry, Jeff.

9 MR. BRADLEY: This is Jeff Bradley. I think with
10 Jordan Reeves' comments on trails, along with what
11 John Gatchell was saying, I do think it's important, when
12 collaboratives bring forth concepts like this, that we be
13 sure that all concepts in the collaborative make it
14 through, so as Jordan was describing some of the
15 opportunities for trails, those get translated into the
16 forest plan as well. That's extremely important.

17 It's quite easy to mark a spot on a map and say this
18 is now an RWA or whatever it is that then excludes use for
19 any number of users and, you know, there's the promise of
20 trails in the future, but getting those trails on the
21 ground takes a lot of work. So having that high-level
22 forest plan acknowledgement of those other opportunities
23 is extremely important. Thanks.

24 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Jeff.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Jeff.

1 I want to circle back to Clint and check in with you.
2 You had a separate question, didn't you, Clint, or
3 comment?

4 MR. CLINT LOOMIS: No. I'm going to talk about
5 the Snowies. I didn't mean to raise my hand there.
6 Sorry.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Oh. Okay. Thanks for the
8 clarification.

9 well, let's go to Zach, then, and then back to Leanne
10 to see if she's got the information she needs here.

11 Zach.

12 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah. I just want to make one
13 quick clarification. 84 percent of the forest is not
14 wilderness. That figure is roughly just under 20 percent,
15 and that includes -- you know, most of that being on the
16 Rocky Mountain Front. So with recommended wilderness and
17 designated wilderness, it's right around 24 percent. So I
18 wanted to make sure we're on the same (inaudible).

19 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Zach.

20 And hey, thanks, everyone. This has been very
21 helpful. It helps clarify in my mind the different
22 perspectives on this area; shouldn't be recommended,
23 should be recommended, and then opportunities in between
24 that spectrum on potential remedies on how to balance uses
25 in there should we go one way or the other on that. And I

1 appreciate the visual and the helping understand, you
2 know, the roads, wildland-urban interface, trying to take
3 that into account, the bicycle use, motorized use. That
4 helps put context on it for me. So thank you very much.

5 I would like to switch over into another area.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Leanne, sorry to interrupt. This
7 is Shawn again. As we were transitioning back to you, it
8 looked like Russ Ehnes was trying to get a word in too,
9 and I wanted to make sure we didn't overlook him.

10 So Russ, did you want to jump in on this?

11 MS. MARTEN: Yes. By all means, Russ.

12 MR. EHNES: No, I think I'm good. I think I just
13 hit my talk button accidentally. I'm fine.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Just making sure.

15 MS. MARTEN: See, Clint, it's not just you. We
16 all hit the buttons.

17 So what I'd like to do is switch over to the Big Snowy
18 area, because that's another area that had some very
19 specific proposed remedies on this. And again, I totally
20 understand the different spectrums on not having any of
21 the recommended wilderness, leaving as is in the '80s
22 plan, and then everything in between on that part of it as
23 well, including more.

24 Lori, if you can do me a favor and put the trail
25 numbers, if we can, on this. Yes. That's very helpful.

1 Thank you.

2 For folks that can see this, what we have is the
3 Big Snowies. And again, the hatched area is currently
4 proposed for recommended wilderness. To the west, if I'm
5 looking at my screen, that's being proposed for a
6 recreation area. And the trails that are on here -- And
7 this is where I need help with clarification, this is why
8 I'm bringing it up.

9 And Lori, help me out. The trails --

10 MS. WOLLAN: This is Lori Wollan. The
11 information that I was given was all the red trails
12 they're asking to have included in the recommended
13 wilderness area; and all the blue trails are being asked
14 to be in the Grandview Recreation Area.

15 The only thing I'm a little bit confused about is I
16 was told that it was Dry Pole Creek Trail 483; Dry Pole
17 Creek is really 481. I don't remember the name of this
18 trail, 483. And then this 470 was actually listed as 476.
19 476 is really in the Crazy Mountains. But this is
20 Timber Creek Trail 470, and it was already in the
21 recommended wilderness area, so I don't know if it was a
22 different trail that was being mentioned.

23 MS. MARTEN: So that's part of the clarification
24 I could use some help with. As Lori said, Trails 654,
25 655, 445, 445A, what we have as Timber Lake is 670, and

1 493, part of the remedy is to include those in recommended
2 wilderness and not have them open to bicycles/motorized
3 use from that standpoint.

4 The other overlay, just for contextual purposes, that
5 Lori just put up here is -- Lori, it's snowmobile areas;
6 correct?

7 MS. WOLLAN: That is correct.

8 MS. MARTEN: So I'm trying to just get a feel,
9 for instance -- And some of it may have been typos or we
10 just missed something, but, for instance, if I'm looking
11 at 493, which currently bisects the whole area right now
12 as recommended wilderness, and 670, clarification on what
13 folks's thoughts are on including those in recommended
14 wilderness when they're already in it. Just help me think
15 through why these trails, like 654, 655, what the thought
16 process was there.

17 And I don't know who the who is. I'm hoping you guys
18 know who the who is that can help me out.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Leanne. It looks like
20 Zach Angstead has his hand up and may have some
21 information for us.

22 So Zach, do you want to weigh in?

23 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah. I am the who.

24 MS. MARTEN: Oh. Good. Hi, who/Zach.

25 MR. ANGSTEAD: This is Zach Angstead from the

1 Montana wilderness Association. So our boundary
2 recommendations are very similar to this. I think
3 Trail 670 was -- I think that was just an error on my
4 part. We do want Trail 445 and 445A and 693 from
5 Crystal Lake to the crest, which is the one that kind of
6 intersects 445A, included in the recommended wilderness
7 boundary; correct.

8 And then Trail 654, 655 included, those are both very
9 steep trails. They're not really suitable for mountain
10 bikes, I think. And specifically on 654, that's the area
11 where horsemen use, for the most part. There's a wide
12 parking spot that's much more usable by horsemen at the
13 bottom of the Snowies, as opposed to the very congested
14 Crystal Lake area.

15 And then one change is about from Trail -- where
16 403 intersects 490, there's West Peak right there. And
17 from that point east, we would ask that to be in
18 rec (inaudible).

19 MS. MARTEN: So, sorry (inaudible).

20 MR. ANGSTEAD: We would ask that to be
21 recommended wilderness, only because at West Peak there's
22 a pretty definitive boundary where you could, you know,
23 make a very good -- there's good topographical features,
24 there's quite a bit of timber stands, where you can really
25 sign that boundary well and prevent bicycles from

1 trespassing into recommended wilderness.

2 MS. WOLLAN: I was trying to bring up the topo
3 map, but it's not coming up readily.

4 MS. MARTEN: Okay. No, that's fine.

5 So Zach, help me out on thoughts -- You know, if I
6 look at some of these and if I'm looking at the southern
7 part and I'm looking at the snowmobile area, yeah, down in
8 there, obviously, some of the trail or trailheads overlap
9 into the snowmobile areas, at least the beginning or end
10 of them, like 655 and 654.

11 MR. ANGSTEAD: Right.

12 MS. MARTEN: Thoughts on that or what -- I'm just
13 trying to track with your reasoning and where you were
14 thinking along those lines.

15 MR. ANGSTEAD: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

16 MS. MARTEN: Sure. If you see 654 and 655 on the
17 screen, you know, the southern part, it overlaps into
18 snowmobiles.

19 MR. ANGSTEAD: Right.

20 MS. MARTEN: That's a road, I'm assuming, that
21 they're intersecting with. I don't know the name of the
22 road, though. What were your thoughts, if any, on just
23 where we do have those overlaps of segments of trails that
24 overlap into the snowmobile areas and it's really hard to
25 break that up? Any thoughts on that, or just what you

1 guys talked about?

2 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah, I understand now. So that
3 southern road thing, it's actually a motorized trail.

4 MS. WOLLAN: That's correct.

5 MR. ANGSTEAD: It's pretty well-used by motorized
6 folks. And we would ask that the recommended wilderness
7 boundary go down probably with an appropriate buffer to
8 that trail just to prevent trespass.

9 But MWA and the people we worked with to come up with
10 these boundaries, we really tried to respect the current
11 use that goes on there, especially in the snowmobile
12 areas. So if that area is used by snowmobiles, as long as
13 we can get an appropriate boundary where there's a
14 definable boundary, I would think that would be okay.

15 And that's why -- It doesn't really show on this map,
16 but the area north of Trail 445 is already used by
17 snowmobilers. We ask that portion to remain in the
18 Grandview Recreation Area or, you know, not recommended
19 wilderness. So...

20 MS. MARTEN: Okay. And then the other clarifying
21 question is -- Because, obviously, I have not been out on
22 these trails, you can tell that already by my questions.
23 445 and 445A, is it currently getting heavily used by
24 equestrian use as well as mechanical, or are you going
25 with that it isn't a big shift to go into recommended

1 wilderness because it certainly isn't heavily used by
2 bicycles or motorized?

3 MR. ANGSTEAD: I would say -- I've hiked 445 a
4 couple times. I've never seen anyone on it. 445A is the
5 cut-across to the other trail, and I think it's rarely
6 used by anyone.

7 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So that was part of the
8 thought process, then? Again, I'm just putting context on
9 it.

10 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah.

11 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That helps.

12 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah.

13 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Zach. Very helpful.
14 That walks me through the thinking there versus just the
15 trail numbers, so thanks.

16 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah. And, you know, if you ever
17 make it over this way, I'd be happy to take you out there.

18 MS. MARTEN: Well, my dream is that I get on
19 trails throughout the region. Now, 25 million acres of
20 trails is a lot to get out on, so -- But I'm not giving up
21 on my dream.

22 So other thoughts or perspectives on this?

23 MR. JOHNSON: We've got a couple of hands raised,
24 Leanne. So I'm going to go to Jeff Bradley next and then
25 Andy Johnson and then John Gatchell.

1 MS. MARTEN: Thank you.

2 MR. BRADLEY: Thanks. This is Jeff, and I have
3 been out biking on those trails. So 445, 445A, which I
4 agree is -- if I remember right, it wasn't in the greatest
5 shape, but putting that aside, is a trail you can go on.

6 MS. MARTEN: Jeff, can I ask you a quick
7 question?

8 MR. BRADLEY: Yes.

9 MS. MARTEN: Are any -- and it sounds like on
10 these they're not, but are trails designated, from the
11 cyclist's viewpoint, the different levels, or are these
12 just, they're open, but they're not -- I think it's like
13 level 1, 2, 3 on the challenge for cyclists?

14 MR. BRADLEY: I don't know about -- I'm not
15 really sure what you're talking about. I don't think the
16 Forest Service has classified it in any way.

17 MS. MARTEN: No, but what I hear sometimes from
18 avid cyclists is they like to have the spectrum of
19 challenges when they're riding and other ways to classify
20 them. We don't do that, but other organizations or other
21 landowners sometimes have it at different levels. And so
22 I just wasn't sure if you hear that or if you pick that up
23 from your peers.

24 MR. BRADLEY: Got it. Yeah, I understand what
25 you're saying. So yeah, certain companies will look at

1 things like grade or average grade or things like that and
2 try to classify them based on how tough they are. And
3 those are probably considered tough trails.

4 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

5 MR. BRADLEY: Expert level, if you will.

6 MS. MARTEN: Gotcha. That helps. Thank you very
7 much.

8 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah.

9 And I think one of the big draws -- And again, I live
10 in Helena. I've only been out there a couple times to the
11 Snowies. One of the big draws is this is a unique
12 experience on the Lewis and Clark. Not only is it one of
13 the very few areas where you can ride if you live in, say,
14 Lewistown, but it is a high alpine experience, and the
15 opportunity to do a loop that incorporates 403, 490, over
16 into 493 is extremely important.

17 I think the concerns around horse use on 654 and 655,
18 I also agree with what Zach said in that they're fairly
19 steep. I don't think that many cyclists would choose to
20 ride those, but there are some that might, and I think
21 that that's going to self-select for those that enjoy that
22 type of experience.

23 I think the biggest emphasis I want to make is with
24 those sort of in that, that core area that loops back down
25 to either the switchback in the road at the bottom of

1 445 or the campground at Crystal Lake itself provide
2 two loop opportunities, which are extremely important for
3 cyclists.

4 MS. MARTEN: Thank you. Very helpful.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Jeff.

6 Let's go to Andy Johnson now. Andy, are you there?

7 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Are you there?

8 MS. MARTEN: I hear you, Andy.

9 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. There we go. Well, one
10 of the commentators mentioned that wilderness was only
11 20 percent, and that's correct technically speaking. But
12 what happens is if we go into an area and we talk to the
13 Forest Service, say we want to work here or there, the
14 first thing we hear is of course we don't (inaudible)
15 areas because they're designated. The first thing we hear
16 is that that's a recommended wilderness area or it's a
17 wilderness study area or it's a roadless area or it's a
18 research natural area. And you add those up -- Because it
19 puts a cloud on the area. It means we better not go in
20 there because we're going to have all kinds of trouble,
21 it's going to be a big fight. And so those areas total up
22 to 84 percent of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National
23 Forest, and so that's my concern.

24 And what I've been working on is trying to get our
25 legislators involved in designating ramp areas. And that

1 is, go back into the forest areas -- because the same
2 process that made the forested areas also made the mineral
3 deposits geologically long before we were born -- and
4 designate these mineralized areas ramp areas, and there
5 would be multiple-use areas, which I don't hear anything
6 from the Forest Service anymore about multiple use, and
7 make them multiple-use areas with the priority being
8 mineral development. And if they're in the wilderness
9 areas, take them out of the wilderness areas; and
10 certainly on these wilderness study areas, recommended
11 wilderness areas, take them out of those areas.

12 And so that's where I come up with the 84 percent.
13 Because I guarantee you, on my side of the fence, when I'd
14 go in to work on these areas, that's the first thing I
15 heard. It's a big downer, and it's got to stop, because
16 we either import our mineral resources and export our
17 wealth and the jobs or we start creating them ourselves
18 again. And so that's what I'm pushing for. But again,
19 that's where I come up with the 84 percent. They're
20 wilderness in waiting is the way to look at it.

21 MS. MARTEN: Appreciate it. Thanks, Andy.
22 Appreciate you clarifying how you were coming up with the
23 number in your perspective on that.

24 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

25 MS. MARTEN: You bet. Thanks, Andy.

1 Shawn, again, I'll go back to you to help me with
2 hands.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. We've John Gatchell weighing
4 in again.

5 And John, it sounds like you have some more context
6 here on what's happening in the Snowies.

7 MR. GATCHELL: Yes. And just to be clear, in
8 this case, this is outside the collaborative agreement
9 areas of the Montana High Divide Trails Collaborative.
10 (Inaudible) the Montana Wilderness Association. In my own
11 experience, this is a wilderness study area
12 congressionally designated, and so we also have to be
13 cognizant of the statutory mandate to preserve wilderness
14 character and wilderness potential as it existed. We did
15 that with the snowmobile community when we negotiated the
16 winter travel plan and then successfully defended it in
17 court.

18 So I think our suggestion -- you know, I think the
19 Forest is on the right track. This is a unique landscape,
20 and it deserves the kind of thought that's going into it
21 in terms of recommended wilderness combined with the
22 recreation area in the northwest. I think that makes a
23 lot of sense.

24 The reason that we're proposing different boundaries
25 is two-fold. One is so it doesn't reduce the wilderness

1 character and run afoul of the legal command to preserve
2 wilderness character. And in that case, the winter travel
3 plan, which the Ninth Circuit upheld with our intervention
4 and that of the Montana Snowmobile Association, that gives
5 you kind of a -- not something you have to copy, but an
6 area of what was wilderness character that was protected.

7 The second piece I think, and I appreciate Jeff's
8 comments, is the practical piece, which is -- I don't know
9 if you can see what I (inaudible), but the east side of
10 the trail is extremely steep. And there is an opportunity
11 to improve trails in the northwest and provide a 20-mile
12 loop trail that I would sure want to ride someday. And
13 that utilizes the landscape and includes one of the
14 features that Jeff pointed out; you know, near West Peak,
15 you're going to get out right on top. And really, really
16 use this landscape.

17 And so that's why our suggestion for differing
18 boundaries I think matches both your legal obligations and
19 some very practical realities on the ground. And I want
20 to second -- I'm retiring tomorrow, but I want to second
21 Zach's invitation, and include Jeff in this, which is
22 let's get out on the ground and take a look at it. And I
23 think we can build a great collaborative coalition around
24 this with a small boundary adjustment in the forest plan.

25 MS. MARTEN: Great. Very helpful, John. Thank

1 you. And congratulations on your upcoming retirement.
2 Now you can get out and enjoy the land a lot more; right?

3 MR. GATCHELL: Yeah, I am going to get out.

4 MS. MARTEN: Good for you.

5 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks.

6 Clint, do you want to weigh in?

7 MR. LOOMIS: I do. And thank you for this
8 opportunity. I'm going to approach this from a Lewistown
9 economic point of view. I agree with the concept of loop
10 trails. They're hugely popular. Right now, we have the
11 Crystal Lake Loop Trail, and that is very, very heavily
12 used. If we go over to 481, 490 to 481, that's going to
13 cross some private land that may -- I mean, that's where
14 the collaboration needs to occur, and that's out into the
15 future. So, you know, I think that that's going to be an
16 interesting challenge.

17 what worries me right now, just as my own personal
18 point of view as a hiker, not a biker, that long Trail 493
19 that goes over to Red Hill Road is basically along a
20 tundra landscape, very fragile. And I would like to see
21 that very much conserved into hoof-and-foot traffic only,
22 making sure that whatever we do for boundaries,
23 mechanized, and I mentioned e-bikes earlier, just making
24 sure that that is well-posted and well-marked not to be
25 trespassed upon.

1 But we do need to figure out something to do with that
2 loop trail around Crystal Lake. I agree, 445 and 445A,
3 that's some tough stuff, but it also goes through
4 Crystal Cascades, which is absolutely gorgeous and so
5 unique that it needs to be protected from overuse. All of
6 this needs to be protected from overuse. And the loop
7 trail right now, the Crystal Lake Loop Trail is heavily,
8 heavily used.

9 what MWA is proposing is to make the 403 a bike trail
10 up to the 490 and then eventually hook it up into
11 (inaudible) to make this marvelous 25-mile loop. And
12 that's going to be a real challenge for bikers. Where the
13 445 comes in and drops down, make that foot traffic only
14 or add horses to it, but keep the bikes off of it. What
15 happens right now, people go up 403, swing around to 445,
16 and ride down 445. Because 445 is steep as heck and, as
17 somebody else mentioned, they will end up pushing their
18 bike up that one.

19 But Charley Karinen would be an -- he's on this, and
20 he'd be excellent to talk to about this, because this is
21 his land, his territory that he plays in all the time.

22 Charley, are you there? I don't know if he left or
23 not.

24 Anyway, I'm going to mute myself. That's my comment.
25 Thank you for listening.

1 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Clint. I appreciate
2 it.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Clint. And
4 thanks for being persistent too. It's hard for me to see
5 the actual hands when we're sharing a screen, so I
6 appreciate the patience.

7 Jeff, I just want to confirm that your hand is up
8 again from before, and then if it is, a quick
9 clarification, let's go to you. Otherwise, I want to get
10 some new voices in here.

11 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah, just a quick clarification.
12 I was referring to the section of 493 from where it
13 intersects with 403 and drops down to the lake as the part
14 that's -- that creates the loop trail. So not the section
15 of 493 that heads to the west in the currently recommended
16 wilderness. Thank you.

17 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. Thanks, Jeff.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Jeff. Helpful.

19 Bryan Lorengo, and then Tom Partin.

20 MR. LORENZO: Yeah. Bryan Lorengo, Montana
21 Logging Association. I just want to share that, you know,
22 our mission statement's provide our forests for future
23 generations. And I have a concern with the 80-plus
24 percent either wilderness, roadless, IRAs and where we're
25 going to be able to manage timber stands going into the

1 future.

2 I'm not opposed to wilderness, neither is our
3 association, but it seems to be once that designation
4 happens, that it won't be managed mechanically going into
5 the future. And we need to manage more than just the WUI
6 and protect infrastructure and power lines, watersheds.
7 Any time they're putting a project together, let's say you
8 have a 70,000-acre project, we're looking to treat 15 to
9 20 percent of that acres as it is, so we're looking at
10 maybe to 2 to 5 percent of the landscape we're treating
11 mechanically. And we wonder why we're having the fire
12 issues we have in California and Washington. Fortunately,
13 we didn't see it in Montana this year.

14 Just my thoughts from myself and our association.
15 Thank you.

16 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Bryan. I appreciate it.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Appreciate you being here,
18 Bryan.

19 Tom Partin.

20 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. Thank you. I'm going to tag
21 along with what Bryan said. And as some of the folks
22 might know, I'm Tom Partin. I represent the American
23 Forest Resource Council, and we represent the forest
24 products industry in many states, five western states,
25 including Montana. Several of the local companies are

1 members of AFRC. And actually, Bryan, Montana Logging is
2 a member, as are some of the counties.

3 AFRC and our members, as Bryan mentioned, we don't
4 oppose wilderness. I've worked very closely with
5 Mike Anderson on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.
6 Mike's our chairman of that collaborative right now and
7 working together on wilderness areas, where to manage, and
8 trying to get a suite of areas that really make sense for
9 everybody.

10 But my main concern is, taking a look at the
11 Helena-Lewis and Clark, and we've talked about the acres
12 that are out there, a half million acres already I think
13 in wilderness, and we've got about half of the forest in
14 roadless areas, inventoried roadless areas. It comes down
15 to the base for our members of what we can manage and
16 where management is acceptable. And if you look at the
17 tables provided in the forest plan, the final plan, we've
18 only got about 12 to 14 percent of the land base that's
19 actually suitable for forest management. Some of the
20 areas you can manage if it benefits other resources.

21 That's one thing as you, Leanne, and Bill strive to
22 get a final decision, this is a multiple-use plan. And
23 whether it be for wilderness, mountain biking, mining,
24 timber, we just ask you to make a multiple-use plan that
25 fits everybody's needs.

1 Now, I want to talk a little bit about how the forest
2 has changed. Over the last decade and a half, since our
3 last forest plan or back in the '80s, we've had a
4 significant amount of forest health issues, with lodgepole
5 pine dying, Douglas-fir dying, and we've had some stand
6 replacement activities going on out there, some things
7 that really cries out for some management or we're going
8 to have situations in Montana like I saw in Oregon this
9 year, with burning up a million acres.

10 So as you look -- what AFRC and our members are asking
11 you to do is to take a hard look at what makes sense for
12 addition of the new wilderness areas. With wilderness,
13 with adding new wilderness comes a really big commitment
14 and a really big responsibility on your part. Because
15 wilderness means no access to motorized equipment, as, for
16 the most part, inventoried roadless. When you have a fire
17 start or when you have the access to get in there to try
18 to stop a fire, and you have a wilderness area, that is
19 really a deterrent. And we saw two of the big fires in
20 Oregon this year blow out of wilderness areas.

21 And I'm particularly concerned where you're looking at
22 adding new wilderness in and around or close to the
23 wildland-urban interface. And when you start putting
24 people's property, people's lives at risk -- And I know we
25 all like wilderness, we want to add to what we're doing

1 and where we like to recreate and get the enjoyment, but I
2 think we need to take it a step further and really ask
3 what are we creating down the road.

4 And again, you know, we're not saying don't make any
5 new wilderness. We're being -- what we would like to do
6 is ask the Forest to be really smart and take a look at
7 where are we looking at new wilderness, what are the
8 implications, not only for those who want the wilderness
9 but for the implications of the people outside of that
10 area and what that might create? Because I think this
11 forest plan needs to be a balance. It needs to be a
12 balance for a lot of folks.

13 We're asking for a small balance for our industry and
14 our members, but also understanding that there's a huge
15 need for the recreation community in Montana and those
16 that want the wilderness aspect, the biking and others.
17 But you as the decisionmaker have a big responsibility and
18 not have to look at just one issue of wilderness, but what
19 the impacts are to other groups.

20 So that's really what I wanted to say. And I
21 appreciate the ability to get those words out there and
22 look forward to where you end up on this. Thank you.

23 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Tom.

24 And I know we're at the top or perhaps we're through
25 the hour, we're at the end of our hour here. The map that

1 you guys saw, those that could see it, that Lori put up
2 had designated wilderness, wilderness study areas,
3 recommended wilderness, and inventoried roadless areas,
4 just to give you a visual from that standpoint. What I
5 want to be real clear with, though, is these all have
6 different management opportunities within them.

7 You know, designated wilderness is different than
8 wilderness study areas. John Gatchell I think is the one
9 that mentioned earlier they're both legislative. So it
10 depends on how they're written into law. Recommended
11 wilderness, inventoried roadless areas are based on rules
12 and administratively in our forest planning process.

13 So what we've been talking about are the boundaries on
14 recommended wilderness areas. As you guys are more than
15 aware, but I'm going to state the obvious, recommended
16 wilderness areas are just that, they're recommended.
17 They're administrative, and depending what we do or don't
18 do with them in the forest plan, they have different
19 forest plan guidelines, standards, components, objectives
20 for how they would be managed. We do not decide whether
21 or not a recommended wilderness area becomes wilderness.
22 That is by the authority of Congress, and only Congress
23 can do that. Like I said, that's stating the obvious, but
24 I also know it gets really confusing with all the
25 designations.

1 I think I have what I need on this, and I want to
2 honor people's time and be able to let them go, if you're
3 going to be joining this afternoon, for a lunch break; or
4 just for those of you that I know took time out of your
5 daily schedules. But I want to make sure if there's
6 something really burning that you didn't think I heard or
7 that I have misheard, I'm going to give you that
8 opportunity in just a minute, but let me just summarize
9 part of what I was hearing.

10 And again, we've got a whole spectrum, and I totally
11 appreciate the different -- you know, on some of these
12 areas we're talking about specifically, not even thinking
13 it should be recommended, some, as folks brought up, are
14 already under wilderness study area legislation, so even
15 if we recommend or don't, that doesn't take away from a
16 law already in place, but how we move forward within the
17 forest plan.

18 This has helped me out tremendously get a feel for the
19 remedies and potential thought processes that went into
20 the Nevada Creek Mountain area and the Big Snowies, which
21 are ones where I found some confusion just trying to track
22 the written part. There's a lot of other areas that you
23 guys have submitted comments on that I'm also taking a
24 hard look at in my response to Forest Supervisor Avey. So
25 just because I didn't bring them up today doesn't mean

1 that I'm not looking at your comments on those as well. I
2 could track those I think pretty clear from that and the
3 different perspectives.

4 I'm hearing a real desire for some clarity, again, and
5 enhancing how we've connected dots, regardless of how
6 things get finalized. Also, just some very strong desire
7 from everybody to make sure that we're taking into account
8 not just one use or one desire but the true multiple use
9 and how that balances out across the entire Helena-Lewis
10 and Clark National Forest from that perspective.

11 And that goes anywhere from, Bryan, you bringing up
12 from the vegetation management standpoint and protection
13 of wildland-urban interface and fire and fuels, and Tom
14 and others brought different perspectives up, to
15 equestrian, hiking, the tundra special areas, and being
16 able to provide experiences, a spectrum of experiences for
17 our public and different areas they can go to do that.

18 Loop routes, be it hiking, bicycle use, snowmobiles,
19 are always very important for various users out there, and
20 accessing special places, be it a lake, a campground,
21 caverns, or what have you. So all of that kind of plays
22 into the thought process here. The trails that came up
23 and remedies, it helped me tremendously to hear
24 specifically some of the thought processes on that and
25 some different perspectives on how people are viewing some

1 of those trails specific to the Big Snowy area, but also
2 on the Nevada Mountain and the Helmville-Gould Trail
3 versus the road and mining and how that all ties in.

4 so a lot for me to digest. Very helpful, though, with
5 the written and with the verbal and the description.

6 And Lori, thanks for trying to track and navigate
7 behind the scenes as I'm verbalizing and people are
8 bringing up numbers and doing the planking as best you
9 could. You did an awesome job on that.

10 Anything I just totally missed that you guys want to
11 make sure I hear?

12 And then, Shawn, I'll let you close us out so we can
13 honor folks's schedules here.

14 MR. JOHNSON: We've got a couple of hands up,
15 Leanne. We've got Mark, Randy, Bonnie.

16 Charley, did you want to say anything? Charley,
17 you're on mute.

18 MR. KARINEN: Okay. Can you hear me?

19 MS. MARTEN: Yes.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Why don't we start with you,
21 Charley? And then we'll go to the other folks here.

22 MR. KARINEN: I would just like to comment as a
23 citizen who has hiked, and I have biked up there too over
24 the last 40 years. And it seems to me like that's a huge
25 chunk of the snowies being reduced from being a wilderness

1 in the future, and I think that's what everybody has to
2 think about here. It's not just now in the next few
3 years, it's 40 years down the line. That's the last
4 island range that's fairly intact as wildland. You know,
5 any decision made needs to be looking further ahead than
6 the next few years. It's just going to get more use, more
7 people are going to want something from that range.

8 So I agree with MWA; if we do have to include all
9 these new uses, like snowmobiles on the west end and
10 bicycles, I would say keep it as close to that road
11 corridor as possible. There might be other options. The
12 ridge just to the west of the road up there, to me, I've
13 biked that; there is a trail there. It does need to be
14 improved. But definitely, 445 is not a bike trail.
15 That's heavily used by hikers to see the Crystal Cascades.
16 I think that would be a mistake to open that up to biking.
17 I don't know of anybody that bikes it now. I know they do
18 the loop trail on the ice caves.

19 But just generally, I think there should be more
20 effort to retain what you have there. It will be gone
21 probably before our lifetime if we let it. So that's all
22 I have to say.

23 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Charley. I appreciate
24 it.

25 MR. JOHNSON: And then let's go to Mark Good

1 next.

2 Mark.

3 MR. GOOD: Hi, you all. I realize we're getting
4 toward the end here, but I did want to say something about
5 the middle fork of the Judith wilderness study area, if
6 that's okay.

7 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

8 MR. GOOD: Thanks. For those not familiar with
9 the area, it's located in the Little Belt Mountains. It's
10 a little over 80,000 acres in size. It's been a
11 wilderness study area since 1997. It's also, I think,
12 important to recognize that it's located near and almost
13 borders the Judith wildlife Management Area, where you
14 have elk migrating almost exclusively into this wilderness
15 study area different times of the year.

16 It seems, as a wilderness study area, an obvious place
17 for recommended wilderness, but it wasn't. And I guess
18 the reason for that is because there's some motorized
19 trails and you have inholding, private inholding in the
20 middle. We recognize that, and we're proposing -- and I
21 wasn't the proposing (inaudible) my comments to the entire
22 area of recommended wilderness, but to recognize that the
23 existing trails are there, they're used, and that if you
24 exclude all of that, you eliminate any conflicts with
25 motorized vehicle use.

1 Now, that quarter area, the northeast corner of it, is
2 not dramatically different. We do have some motorized
3 trails, but it's still -- certainly call it a
4 semi-primitive area. But the remainder, where there
5 aren't any motorized vehicle trails or aren't any roads,
6 it would seem to me hard to argue that it's not
7 wilderness-quality land. I have hiked through almost all
8 of that, and, you know, it just seems like it's, again, an
9 obvious place where you would recommend for wilderness.

10 Within that portion, that non-motorized portion,
11 mountain bikes are currently allowed. There's not much
12 use. The Forest (inaudible) actually analyzed the impact
13 or the potential to effect a future designation as a
14 wilderness area.

15 So we were, again, you know, recommending -- So I
16 don't know, if you exclude all of that, again, it doesn't
17 seem to me that there would be the kind of conflicts,
18 but -- So the solution, and you are looking for some
19 remedies, again, is just to exclude that quarter of the
20 wilderness study area, probably 20,000 acres in there, and
21 you would have a solid block.

22 I don't know -- Again, there is the statutory mandate
23 to protect the wilderness study area, and I don't know, I
24 guess it maybe can be resolved with allowing mountain
25 bikes into an area that's supposed to be managed as

1 wilderness. But it would clearly have an effect on its
2 potential for future wilderness designation. And I think
3 allowing bikes in there to get established, as we've seen
4 in other forests, the Gallatin, Beaverhead, and elsewhere,
5 would clearly undermine the potential for future
6 designation.

7 So I guess I would like to hear more about how that
8 decision was made and also consider this remedy that we
9 had proposed in allowing existing motorized trails to
10 continue and allowing vehicles -- mechanized and motorized
11 use in that quarter of the portion.

12 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thank you, Mark. Very
13 helpful. Appreciate that.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Mark.

15 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Lori, for pulling it up.

16 MR. JOHNSON: And just to reiterate Leanne's
17 questions, so just really trying to focus on key things
18 that she needs to hear. She's done a really thorough job
19 reading your written objections. So just let's try to
20 keep your comments as brief as possible so that we can
21 give Leanne a lunch break here before we come back at
22 1:30. I know we do want to hear from everyone. We've got
23 Randy Gray, and we've got a phone number ending in 1028,
24 and then we've got Jordan Reeves.

25 So Randy.

1 MS. MARTEN: Randy, you're on mute.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Oh, and Bonnie. Sorry, Bonnie. I
3 remember you.

4 MS. MARTEN: There you go, Randy.

5 MR. GRAY: Okay. Thanks. I don't know if this
6 is the proper time, but kind of following Mark's comments
7 on the Judith, my particular area of I guess expertise, if
8 you will, is the Tenderfoot-Deep Creek area, where
9 landowners, inholders in that area up there, abuts the
10 Smith River. There's just -- it is some of the wildest
11 country in the state of Montana. I mentioned earlier that
12 I worked for six different years for the Forest Service in
13 the Bob Marshall. The Tenderfoot has equally -- there is
14 just terrific stuff there. I would invite you, Leanne, to
15 join me on our horses sometime and we'll go down in there.

16 But I've already made comments about that, but the
17 point I wanted to raise here, because I guess we're not
18 going to be talking about the Tenderfoot-Deep Creek here
19 today at all, there's about 150,000 acres down there that
20 is absolutely wilderness-quality stuff. And recognizing
21 that, keeping the mountain bikes out of that area so it
22 doesn't further detract from the possibility of later
23 listing as wilderness is I guess the point I want to make.

24 Many years ago, the last wilderness bill that kind of
25 included that area -- I actually worked with Pat Williams

1 on drawing up the boundaries of a proposed
2 Tenderfoot-Deep Creek, sitting across the table from him
3 with a map. And we had included the Tenderfoot
4 Experimental Forest as part of a proposed wilderness area.
5 That went in as a proposal, and I can't remember if it was
6 Dale Gorman or maybe Rick Prausa, but the forest
7 supervisor at the time asked us if we would delete the
8 inclusion of the Tenderfoot Experimental Forest, which we
9 as MWA agreed to do. It made sense.

10 But it was with the representation -- And I know those
11 guys can't commit the Forest Service 30 years down the
12 road, but it was with their representation that the
13 Forest Service would not oppose some kind of big block of
14 wilderness in the Tenderfoot-Deep Creek area. And they
15 were dealing with the issue at that time of inholdings and
16 the checkerboard of all the bare stuff down there, and the
17 Zehntner Ranch and Gary Anderson's place on Deep Creek
18 Park on the Smith River.

19 It turns out I represented Gary Anderson on
20 consolidating his holdings on Deep Creek Park, put all
21 that under a conservation easement. The Forest Service
22 then, through the LWCF funding, was able to acquire the --
23 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation was able to acquire all the
24 bare tens of thousands of acres in there, checkerboard.
25 The Zehntner property was resolved, and the Taylor Hills

1 property was resolved.

2 My point of all that background is the Tenderfoot-Deep
3 Creek is just cued up for consideration of wilderness
4 designation. There is terrific stuff in there. Some of
5 the management issues the Forest Service faced over
6 decades has been resolved now. So my final pitch is that
7 we hope that the Forest Service would consider including
8 the Tenderfoot-Deep Creek large blocks as actual
9 wilderness. Thanks very much.

10 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Randy. Appreciate it.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Randy.

12 Bonnie, you were next in line.

13 MS. RICE: Thank you. And thanks, Leanne, for
14 taking some extra time here to hear from all of us. We
15 appreciate it.

16 I guess I just wanted to say that a lot of times in
17 this discussion of recommended wilderness and different
18 designations, all the focus seems to be on the various,
19 you know, my use versus your use or mountain bikes versus
20 motorized or hikers or that kind of thing. But what we
21 really haven't talked about today that I haven't heard is
22 really thinking about the need for wildlife, and that is
23 something that -- you know, that's a mandate of the
24 Forest Service also, of course, is really to provide for
25 the needs of wildlife and habitat.

1 And so I'm concerned -- And this is part of our
2 objections. Sierra Club is really concerned about the
3 lack of recommended wilderness and the very small amount
4 that's in the 2020 forest plan. And, you know, we're
5 particularly concerned about the lack of recommended
6 wilderness in Zone 2. And again, I talk a lot about
7 connectivity and connectivity for grizzly bears, but that
8 is hugely important, because Montana plays such a huge
9 role in grizzly bear recovery for the entire lower 48, and
10 this forest plays a huge role in achieving that
11 connectivity on the ground. And so when we look at
12 recommended wilderness, there's not very much,
13 particularly in Zone 2; there's hardly anything, just a
14 little bit in the Big Belts, you know, in that
15 connectivity zone.

16 And, you know, yesterday we talked a bit about the
17 Sierra Club's concerns about there being desired
18 conditions for connectivity but no real plan components
19 outside of what's in the NCDE Grizzly Bear Amendment for
20 Zone 1 other than food storage in Zone 2. And so when we
21 look at the lack of recommended wilderness in that
22 connectivity area and the lack of plan components in
23 Zone 2 for connectivity, those are real concerns to us.

24 And also, I noted that in the plan, it talks about,
25 you know, there's 48 percent more recommended wilderness

1 in this plan than in the 1986 plan where grizzly bears are
2 currently present. And that sounds good, but what it
3 translates to is only 16,000 more acres, that's it, of
4 recommended wilderness in the areas where grizzly bears
5 currently exist. And so, you know, that doesn't speak at
6 all to the connectivity areas in Zone 2. And so we really
7 hope this Forest considers very seriously, you know, those
8 deficiencies and really looks at recommending more
9 wilderness; in particular, the Big Belts, the Crazyes, the
10 Little Belts, and also Arrasta Creek and the
11 Upper Blackfoot. Thank you.

12 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Bonnie. Appreciate it.

13 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thanks, Bonnie.

14 Let's get to the last two here. We've got a phone
15 number ending in 1028. If you would like to take yourself
16 off mute and share your comment.

17 MR. KERR: Hi. This is Rick Kerr in Choteau, and
18 I just wanted to be brief, but I wanted to remind
19 everybody that the fires on the West Coast are really due
20 to extreme conditions, and we will be facing that as time
21 goes by. We do have a climate change situation that is
22 not going to get any better any time soon. So we need to
23 keep that in mind in our management plans, and I'm hoping
24 that this management plan, this go-around will be more
25 flexible than our previous forest plans that have taken,

1 what, 20 years to revise. So we need to be flexible going
2 forward. And I don't know if that's through amendments
3 depending on how the land is affected, but I think that's
4 something we all need to be thinking about.

5 And my other thought was back in 1986, I actually
6 fought the Sandpoint Fire in the Little Belt Mountains,
7 and that was in the Judith Wilderness Study Area, and we
8 did it on foot and we had help, obviously, with the
9 retardant planes. So you can fight fire in wilderness
10 areas. That's my comments.

11 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Rick.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thanks, Rick.

13 And Jordan.

14 MR. REEVES: Thank you. I'll be super-duper
15 brief. On behalf of the Upper Blackfoot Collaborative, I
16 just wanted to note that our objection and the
17 conversation today was focused very specifically on
18 certain recommended wilderness areas. But to sort of
19 respond or, you know, recognize the comments of several
20 folks here about fire risk, fire danger, that's present on
21 all of our minds right now. I just wanted to let folks
22 know that our collaborative group has involved the fire
23 chief, fire managers, the local timber mill, and it's
24 about much more than the narrow objections that we've put
25 forward. We just focused on those areas that we felt were

1 most relevant to this objections process.

2 But Leanne, we've engaged a bunch with your staff on
3 the ground and at the forest level, invite you to come
4 join us to learn more about how the docs between the
5 Nevada Mountain Recommended Wilderness Area, the Arrasta
6 Creek Wilderness Area that we're advocating for, how those
7 are linked to those other discussions about fire risk and
8 fire safety that we've addressed to local folks. So thank
9 you.

10 MS. MARTEN: Yes. Thanks, Jordan.

11 And thank you, everyone, for the additional comments
12 and clarifications. And I'm going to piggyback, as I wrap
13 up here on you, Jordan, what you just said.

14 We focused in, and I purposely focused in, on some
15 real specific questions today and areas, fully recognizing
16 there's a whole bunch of other thought process, dialogue,
17 comments in your written objections that will be part of
18 the bigger picture and consideration. I just needed help
19 on some of those specific ones. And, as you guys can
20 tell, we could spend days talking about just this topic,
21 on that part of it. But I do appreciate you guys bringing
22 up and making sure I'm aware of some of these other, not
23 only areas but other thought processes that went into your
24 objections that were very thoughtful and very specific for
25 various reasons as well.

1 I'm going to turn it over to Shawn to close us out for
2 a lunch break. We will be talking, after lunch, on a
3 couple other areas, but very focused in on some designated
4 areas of Badger-Two Medicine, Elkhorns, Continental Divide
5 National Scenic Trail. I know some of you will be joining
6 with that as well.

7 But Shawn, help us out on the logistics and the rest
8 of the agenda, if you would, please.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Leanne, you basically do my job for
10 me, so this is so easy.

11 We're going to take a break here. We'll see a lot of
12 you joining us back at 1:30. We'll have that conversation
13 on designated area management, including the Badger-
14 Two Medicine, Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, and the
15 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail right at 1:30.

16 You guys are welcome to just mute your audio and
17 video, if you'd like, or we'll use the same link to jump
18 back on. I know we're all probably ready for a break to
19 stretch our legs and grab some food, so please do that,
20 and we'll see you again shortly.

21 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, everyone.

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1 OTHER DESIGNATED AREAS - BADGER-TWO MEDICINE, ELKHORN
2 WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT, CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL
3 SCENIC TRAIL

4 wednesday, september 30, 2020, 1:30 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.

5 A P P E A R A N C E S

6 FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

7 FOREST SERVICE:

8 LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer
9 SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor
10 DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader
11 LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist
12 SCOTT NAGEL, watersheds
13 WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist
14 AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist
15 KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds
16 ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses
17 LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor
18 JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff
19 CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist
20 TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner
21 CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

22 OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

23 OBJECTORS/INTERESTED PERSONS PREVIOUSLY INTRODUCED
24 MICHAEL KORN
25 GREG WARREN

OBJECTORS/INTERESTED PERSONS PREVIOUSLY INTRODUCED WITH
COMMENTS ON THIS TOPIC:

AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.
JOHN GATCHELL, MT High Divide Trails Collaborative
ERIC CLEWIS, Montana wildlife Federation
ZACH ANGSTEAD, Montana Wilderness Association
JEFF BRADLEY, Montana Bicycle Guild
PETER METCALF, Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance
SARAH LUNDSTRUM, National Parks Conservation Assn.
TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council
JORDAN REEVES, Upper Blackfoot Collaborative
RANDY GRAY, Badger-Two Medicine

1 MR. JOHNSON: Hi, everyone. It's 1:30. I'd like
2 to welcome everyone back to this afternoon session of the
3 Helena-Lewis and Clark forest plan revision objection
4 resolution meeting. A lot of you have been with us
5 throughout the day, but certainly, I want to welcome
6 everyone who is just joining us right now. We've got one
7 more issue to cover this afternoon, and so we'll be
8 turning quickly here to that issue on other designated
9 areas, including the Badger-Two Medicine, the Elkhorn
10 Wildlife Management Unit, and the Continental Divide
11 National Scenic Trail.

12 I want to thank everyone from the Forest Service who
13 has been helping me in the background here manage the
14 technology. It seems to be working well. And thanks,
15 everyone, who is joining us remotely too. It's great to
16 be able to have this opportunity to connect with you
17 remotely. I'm just going to drop a couple of things here
18 in the chat box, including some contact information and a
19 couple of best practices just to help us all stay
20 connected.

21 It's helpful for us, as we're looking at people's
22 screens, especially for those who are objectors or
23 interested persons, if you would rename yourself on the
24 Zoom screen with your first name, last name, and your
25 organizational affiliation. You do that by clicking on

1 the box where you appear on the Zoom screen. There's a
2 blue field with three dots in the upper right-hand corner.
3 Click on that, click on Rename, and that will give you
4 that chance. If you are the lead objector, it's also
5 helpful to know that, so right after your name, if you
6 could signify if you are the lead objector, that would be
7 great.

8 Also, for those who are joining us from the press,
9 we've got a media contact here. So Chiara is available
10 and on standby if you'd like to contact her. If anybody
11 has technical issues that they encounter along the way,
12 either with respect to the technology or with respect to
13 the planning process, we've got Cody and Timory on standby
14 as well, and their information is provided.

15 We're also capturing this in a couple of different
16 ways. We've got a transcriptionist joining us over the
17 course of the three days, and so just a reminder to speak
18 slowly and clearly so that Cheryl can grab our conversaton
19 and have that as part of the record. And we also are
20 offering closed caption in real time, and so you'll see a
21 link in the chat box there for additional -- if you want
22 to click on that and get real-time closed captioning.
23 That does open in another box outside of the Zoom.

24 Just a reminder on, you know, basic ground rules of
25 listening to understand, respecting diverse opinions and

1 perspectives. We're really here to hear your thoughts and
2 make sure that Leanne, the regional forester, really
3 understands where you're coming from, both in terms of the
4 substance of some of the objections, but also, she's got
5 some questions about possible remedies to some of these
6 objections, and really listening to those questions and
7 trying to help inform the decisionmaking process as we
8 move forward.

9 I would invite those who are objectors or who are
10 interested persons for this topic to go ahead and turn
11 your video screens on now. We welcome those who are
12 joining as members of the public as well, but we would
13 just ask that you stay with your video off. That will
14 help us see who are the objecting parties as well as the
15 interested persons versus those who are listening in
16 today. I certainly welcome everyone who has carved out
17 some time to be with us here today.

18 Buying a little bit of time here, just because I see a
19 couple more people jumping in to this session. I want to
20 make sure that everyone has a chance to jump online here.

21 Okay. It looks like a lot of familiar faces from
22 earlier today. I will go ahead and ask people who have
23 not yet had a chance to introduce themselves to go ahead
24 and do so. That will give us a chance also to test the
25 audio and visual connection to make sure that we're

1 hearing and seeing you okay. And then after that, I'll
2 turn it over to Leanne and Sara to lead today's
3 conversation on designated areas.

4 I'm trying to see if there's -- Michael Korn, have you
5 joined us earlier today? would you like to say hi?

6 MR. KORN: I joined earlier on the introductory
7 stuff earlier this morning. I'm from the north end of the
8 Elkhorns, Montana City/Clancy.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Michael. This
10 is a good memory test for me.

11 Is there anyone else who hasn't had a chance to test
12 their audio or visual?

13 Greg, were you with us earlier today? Greg Warren.
14 Greg, you're on mute just now.

15 MR. WARREN: Okay. I think I got it. Yeah, I
16 was briefly this morning, but I'm back for the rest of the
17 afternoon.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Awesome.

19 And Dave, welcome back.

20 Anyone on the phone joining us who wasn't here
21 earlier?

22 All right. well, I will go ahead and turn it over to
23 Leanne then. Leanne.

24 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Shawn.

25 And welcome back for those that were here earlier this

1 morning, and welcome to those that are joining us new this
2 afternoon. I'm always very appreciative of you just
3 taking time out for the discussion and to help me try and
4 understand the objections and some of the points, and I
5 appreciate your patience with my questions ahead of time
6 here. Many of you have been subject to them all day, so
7 very appreciative of your patience listening here today.

8 As we move forward -- you know, we started out this
9 morning, for those that weren't able to join us, talking
10 about motorized/mechanized use and in various areas across
11 the Helena-Lewis and Clark. And particularly, there was
12 quite a bit of discussion around the suitability of
13 different types of use within recommended wilderness. We
14 just finished, about a half hour or so ago, with a really
15 robust dialogue around boundaries of various areas across
16 the forest and tied to recommended wilderness areas and
17 different remedies and thoughts that went into that.

18 And throughout both of those discussions, some of you
19 brought up your passion and your desires and your thoughts
20 around some of these other designated areas and special
21 areas, particularly Badger-Two Medicine and the Elkhorn
22 areas, and then there were some that overlapped with some
23 of our national scenic trails such as the Continental
24 Divide. And this afternoon, you know, it all kind of
25 works in cumulatively to some level, of course, but

1 really, the topic that we're on now is very specific to
2 the Badger-Two Medicine, the Elkhorn wildlife Management
3 Unit, and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

4 I'm going to do the best I can to try and just
5 summarize some of the perspectives that we saw in your
6 written objections. And as I've done before, I'm not
7 getting into every nuance that we heard on the objections,
8 but trying to do a ballpark, big sky summary, and then
9 really starting to key into some of the proposed remedies
10 that many of you brought forward, and I have some
11 questions along those, because what I really need is some
12 help on understanding, making sure I'm seeing it through
13 your lens, and then having you guys hear from each other
14 as well. Because as you can imagine, there's the spectrum
15 of what we're hearing for these areas.

16 I will start out saying that there is no lack of
17 passion for any of these areas from anybody, and nobody is
18 saying yea or nay, like, dislike, or any of that, which I
19 love. You know, I love the fact that we have such
20 interested and passionate folks in the public that care
21 about their public lands from that standpoint. So when
22 I'm talking about these areas, I'm going to be a broken
23 record here for some of you, please do not misinterpret
24 any questions that I'm asking as me trying to put any kind
25 of judgment or say right, wrong, or in any way trying to

1 say you do not have or should not have your personal or
2 organizational values, because many of these I know are
3 tied very much to value systems. I would never do that
4 for anybody or ask that. My questions are simply me
5 trying to get a big picture and to get the context set on
6 that.

7 You're not going to have a set decision from me today.
8 This will all be something I'm taking into consideration,
9 along with all the written objections and the information
10 you shared that way, as I work on my final response to
11 Forest Supervisor Avey on the objection period and the
12 objections received.

13 So here's what I was hearing on some of these
14 three areas in general. Badger-Two Medicine is, and some
15 of it had come up earlier today, and a little bit
16 yesterday with all of the wildlife topics as well that
17 we've discussed, is very much a traditional cultural area.
18 There's been a lot of feelings and a lot of objections and
19 a lot of issues, concerns on a whole spectrum regarding
20 mechanized/motorized use, honoring where the tribes may be
21 coming from, and just how we're moving forward with
22 management into the future.

23 Specifically, there's been quite a bit of concerns
24 raised on some changes between the draft that everyone was
25 able to comment on and the final that you guys saw

1 regarding some of the standards and guidelines, and more
2 standards than not, for the Badger-Two Medicine, and some
3 of those that got removed between the draft and final. So
4 there was some heightened concern around why they were
5 removed, concern that they were removed. And I want to
6 put that out there that we heard you on that and we're
7 taking a hard look at that from, you know, what did or
8 didn't change and making sure that there weren't some
9 errors from that standpoint.

10 Like a lot of things -- you know, the formatting of
11 the forest plan, the new forest plan format is different
12 than the old one, and so we recognize there could be some
13 confusion. But just so I put that out there, we heard
14 you, we're moving forward, and we're looking into all of
15 that, just like everything from that standpoint. So you
16 aren't going to hear a bunch of questions from me around
17 that, but I did want to acknowledge that was really
18 resonant in several objections specific to the
19 Badger-Two Medicine area on that.

20 The Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, there's, again,
21 a whole spectrum. There's concern on some of the
22 guidelines and why they're not standards and concerns that
23 they're not standards. There was heightened awareness of
24 are we really, truly emphasizing it as a wildlife
25 management unit or is some of the way the new forest plan

1 has gone out and is proposed taking away from the emphasis
2 on the wildlife management unit part of the Elkhorns is
3 one key thing that we were definitely hearing on that.
4 And the desire to keep it very much a wildlife management
5 unit area. Without repeating the stuff about mechanized
6 and motorized use and some of the boundaries and all that,
7 but all that ties into it, connectivity, diversity,
8 wildlife. All those things are tied into that bigger
9 generalization that I just made in a very paraphrased,
10 shortened, succinct sentence there, understanding there's
11 a lot of nuances and complexities to it.

12 And then with the Continental Divide Trail, there was
13 a couple different things. There's concerns and thoughts
14 that we do not have the components in the forest plan that
15 we need to for the national scenic trail, and therefore we
16 need to put several more or different types of components
17 in there, which may or may not, depending on which
18 objector and where they were coming from -- Some said that
19 would trigger, in their mind, the need to do renewed
20 analysis and go back out for a public comment. But a
21 desire to have different types of components for the
22 Continental Divide Trail to maintain its integrity as a
23 national scenic trail on that.

24 So that's kind of ballpark. I know that doesn't get
25 into every detail, but any questions or clarifications on

1 that or is there something there I said that just seemed
2 like I was totally way off base?

3 It doesn't look like it. I'm kind of seeing heads
4 nodding this way (gesturing), which is a good thing.
5 Okay. we'll jump into the dialogue here, and, obviously,
6 correct me, or if I'm seemingly misunderstanding something
7 that you all put forward, that's what I need to hear. So
8 please help me out.

9 So let me jump in with a couple questions I have. And
10 as always, for those that have been with me now for almost
11 two days, I'm starting out kind of just general just to
12 get the dialogue going, but also just trying to get my
13 mind wrapped around and making sure I'm understanding some
14 of the distinctions that you guys were bringing forward in
15 your written objections. And one of them was regarding --
16 and Al, you might have to help me out with this, because I
17 know you've brought it up a couple times on the Elkhorn
18 wildlife Management Unit, and I want to make sure I'm
19 hearing correctly part of this, but then I have a
20 question.

21 Part of the concern I understood from the written, and
22 you've articulated in some other meetings here the last
23 couple days, some of the guidelines that we have in the
24 wildlife management unit for the Elkhorns you feel
25 strongly should be standards; and that if it's a standard,

1 it has a higher importance or value added to it versus a
2 guideline. And it's important, for the wildlife
3 management unit part of the Elkhorns and to maintain
4 particularly the core area, to have more of the guidelines
5 that are in the proposed plan to actually be standards.
6 And I believe to have some additional standards added, but
7 I don't know if I'm understanding that.

8 So can you help me tease that out a little bit more?
9 And I'll start with you, and, obviously, any others,
10 please feel free to join.

11 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yeah. Thank you. And I
12 know that the Elkhorn Restoration Committee and the
13 Elkhorn working Group filed very similar comments, and I
14 know Joe Cohenour is not on here, who I think was listed
15 as their objector, but I'll carry his water for him.

16 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

17 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: And then there's a couple
18 other people that may be on from the working group also
19 that may help.

20 But the issue is that in the draft plan, in the
21 writing of a couple of guidelines and a couple of
22 standards, they did not put reference to the fact that
23 wildlife is the primary driver in this whole wildlife
24 management unit. It's not just the core area, it's the
25 whole unit. And so what it does is it relegates it to

1 nothing different than standard forest practices out there
2 on the rest of the forest.

3 The wording that was in the '86 plan specifically said
4 that these areas are to be managed considering resource
5 values in concert with protecting and enhancing wildlife
6 habitat and wildlife management. That's missing in this
7 plan, and that's what we're objecting to, is the loss of
8 that stature for this area as a wildlife management area
9 that's so unique and is so important. I mean, this is a
10 nationally recognized place now, just because of how it's
11 been managed and how the state has helped in the hunting
12 and that kind of thing. But there's a lot of recreation
13 now that comes here just to see critters.

14 It's not a, quote, "forest management area," it's a
15 wildlife management area. And the lack of some of those
16 words between the old plan and the new one, whether it's
17 directed at a guideline or standard, is very critical to
18 and how we perceive the future management of this area
19 could evolve when the wildlife is not in those standards.
20 It doesn't say that wildlife is a priority or other things
21 have to be managed with wildlife there. So that's
22 important. And it --

23 MS. MARTEN: That's --

24 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: -- carries along with a
25 couple other ones.

1 MS. MARTEN: I'm sorry, Al. I didn't mean to
2 interrupt. But that's where you did, in your remedies,
3 give some proposed wording to put back in --

4 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes, we did.

5 MS. MARTEN: -- and that's where that was coming
6 from.

7 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes. And that's why those
8 are important. We didn't make many of them, but they're
9 important.

10 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

11 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: The other is -- And that
12 carries right on to -- There's been decisions made on oil
13 and gas leasing only in the comment section back in the
14 back, but that needs to be brought forward so that it's
15 like a standard. It says here's how oil and gas leasing
16 is viewed in the wildlife management area, here's why
17 mineral exploration and extracting has to acknowledge the
18 wildlife values out here. And so it brings all those in
19 together in that context of a wildlife management unit.

20 MS. MARTEN: So that the oil and gas, Al,
21 specifically bringing it up, in your opinion, to a
22 guideline or standard that has that wording and/or in the
23 record of decision --

24 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Well, it would be -- What we
25 need is the public disclosure of the fact that there's

1 already been a decision made on oil and gas leasing in the
2 Elkhorns, and that's not present in the draft. It's not
3 brought forward anyplace. And then the recognition of the
4 wildlife values along with the mineral extraction stuff is
5 missing. So those need to be brought in so that they're
6 on the record that this is the current status of this
7 stuff.

8 MS. MARTEN: Great. Very helpful. That helps
9 clarify. Thank you very much.

10 And I think saw, John, your hand. John Gatchell.

11 MR. GATCHELL: Thanks, Leanne. I just want to
12 second Al's comments about the plan actually, I hope
13 unintentionally, weakens the priority of the wildlife
14 management, and so we too believe that keeping wildlife as
15 a priority is essential. The decision in '98 was that
16 having a wildlife management unit and an oil and gas field
17 were incompatible, so it's not suitable for oil and gas
18 leasing.

19 And the third issue in the Elkhorns -- there are many
20 issues, but I think that the wildlife piece, the language
21 is actually weaker than the '86 language, and it needs to
22 make it clear that wildlife is priority. This is a
23 showpiece of Forest Service management, alternative
24 management, I think, that goes back a long ways and has a
25 great collaborative history. And I can only believe it

1 was a mistake to weaken that language, but it weakens it
2 in fundamental ways.

3 And the third thing I think is that the core, you
4 know, the traditional uses and primitive uses in the core
5 are the appropriate use, and it shouldn't be managed
6 recreationally as a one-size-fits-all. There's a
7 difference between the primitive core and the periphery of
8 the area. The Elkhorns encompasses a lot of different
9 landscapes, from roaded and even areas that are 25 percent
10 privately owned within the boundaries of the forest to
11 areas that could easily be recommended wilderness in the
12 core. So we think the recreation management should be
13 across the full spectrum, from primitive, foot and stock,
14 to more developed recreation with opportunities for
15 mountain biking in between, but not everything everywhere.

16 MS. MARTEN: So just to make sure I'm not talking
17 like this with either Al or you, John, you've got the
18 Elkhorn and you've got the Elkhorn core, and we've mapped
19 the Elkhorn core and the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit
20 in the proposed plan. So you're not, I'll just say
21 disputing, for lack of a better term, the boundaries, but
22 what I hear you saying, John, is there are some things for
23 that core area in addition to the larger area that you
24 think is important for us to take into account.

25 MR. GATCHELL: Yeah. The old plan divided the

1 Elkhorns into different I think four or five management
2 areas and had differing emphasis on how it developed and
3 what sorts of recreation. And, you know, recreation has
4 changed a lot since then, so we're not saying go back, but
5 rather that the new plan then goes in the opposite
6 direction and just homogenizes it and treats the core
7 exactly the same as the areas that are right outside of
8 Helena, where we will support a trail system consistent
9 with the wildlife management unit. But in the core, the
10 primitive nature of the core needs to be preserved, and
11 this plan doesn't do it.

12 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Thank you.

13 And Shawn, I'm going to rely on you, because I see
14 different hands that I'm not keeping track with who is
15 who. So help me with hands.

16 Thank you. Very helpful.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Happy to help out, Leanne.

18 Thank you, John and Al, for kicking things off.

19 Let's go over to Eric Clewis and then back to Al. I
20 think Al wanted to weigh back in on something.

21 So Eric.

22 MR. CLEWIS: Hi. This is Eric Clewis with the
23 Montana Wildlife Federation. I kind of just want to
24 piggyback off what John and Al have both said. It seems
25 like the plan as it is now really doesn't preserve the

1 primitive nature of the core, and it really doesn't do
2 anything to separate this area for its wildlife
3 characteristics. And it's the perspective of the
4 wildlife Federation that we would like to see some more
5 stringent standards put in place to actually differentiate
6 this as what it is, somewhere known for its characteristic
7 wildlife and wildlife values there.

8 so I don't have, like, an exact answer to how to do
9 that necessarily, but I know --

10 MS. MARTEN: You read my mind.

11 MR. CLEWIS: Yeah. I don't know exactly how to
12 do it. I know the way it is right now doesn't work,
13 though. I don't think oil and gas leasing is appropriate
14 for this area. I don't think mountain biking through the
15 core area is appropriate. And as it stands, in the
16 wildlife section of the Elkhorns, there's one standard and
17 it's in relation to bighorn sheep and domestic sheep
18 grazing, which is great, but I think -- I mean, as the
19 name implies, Elkhorns, it's known for its elk populations
20 as well, and I think for the only standard to be in
21 reference to bighorn sheep is kind of a disservice.

22 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

23 MR. CLEWIS: That's just kind of my two cents,
24 but I think, from everyone I've talked to, most people are
25 in agreeance that the Elkhorns do need some special

1 attention paid to them.

2 MS. MARTEN: Thank you. And you read my mind,
3 Eric, because you knew I was going to ask you for an
4 example. So part of what -- Let me just clarify something
5 with you, if I could, Eric. You mentioned the Elkhorn
6 core area versus the rest of the Elkhorns and making sure
7 that at a minimum for that core area, there's something
8 more distinct that emphasizes the importance of that core
9 area, feeling that it got lost from the old plan, the
10 draft, into the final on the 2020 plan. Is that a fair...

11 MR. CLEWIS: Yeah. Yeah, to me, it just -- I
12 guess the core of the argument I'm trying to make is that
13 if you just look at the plan, there's no way to
14 differentiate the Elkhorns as a wildlife management unit.
15 It looks like anywhere else on the forest.

16 MS. MARTEN: Gotcha.

17 MR. CLEWIS: And I would like to see some
18 standards implemented that would actually address that and
19 try to bring some more stringent management to the area.

20 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That helps. And that's what
21 I heard Al and John also expressing, similar to that.
22 Thanks.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Eric.

24 Al, did you want to jump back in with some more
25 clarification there?

1 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yeah, just a little bit.
2 The discussion about the core deals a lot with the ROS and
3 the condition of the core as what was the originally
4 proposed wilderness area within the Elkhorn Mountains.

5 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

6 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: The wildlife management area
7 is literally from I-15 to Highway 287. It's a large area,
8 and it's all wildlife management unit. So the core is a
9 primitive part of the Elkhorns, and it was part of the
10 hard-fought compromise that everybody worked on for a lot
11 of time to get to the fact that it was going to be a
12 wildlife management unit. So that's the core part.

13 The standards apply across the whole wildlife
14 management plan, not specifically just to the core. The
15 core is the roadless -- you know, it's only got a couple
16 trails in it. And so a lot of that discussion was back to
17 the mechanized use issue we had earlier this morning, was
18 the core part.

19 The other part is that the Forest made a change in
20 their Alternative C valuation of the area that was listed
21 as mechanized or suitable for mechanized where the current
22 use has escalated, and they moved that Alternative C
23 boundary without any real discussion of why. And we would
24 like to see that moved back to the original Alternative C
25 boundary so that we have some buffer zone between this,

1 what is encroaching is pretty heavy mechanized use in the
2 wildlife management area.

3 MS. MARTEN: Very helpful. Thank you, Al. And I
4 appreciate you bringing up that boundary part and
5 clarification and desire to have it be different than
6 where the proposed decision is at.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thanks.
8 we've got Zach's hand up as well.

9 I forgot to remind everyone how to raise your hand.
10 And I think we've got everyone returning from before, but
11 a reminder that it's down in that Participants button, and
12 then there will be a Raise Hand option. And then for
13 those that are on the phone, it's star 9.

14 Also, Leanne, the planning team said that they're
15 ready to pull a map of that core area as a visual and help
16 you kind of distinguish between the core and the entire
17 area. So if you'd like that, let us know and we'll pull
18 it up as we continue the conversation.

19 MS. MARTEN: Okay. I appreciate that. Let's
20 keep going and then we may need it pulled up. But thanks,
21 folks.

22 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Zach and then Jeff.
23 Zach.

24 MR. ANGSTEAD: Really, Al just covered my
25 comment, is that there is a big change in the map of

1 Alternative C for the core area, particularly in the
2 northern section of the Elkhorns. And MWA would like to
3 see that area returned as in the draft environmental
4 impact statement.

5 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So here's what would help me
6 on the map, folks. If you could pull that up and point me
7 to that change that Al and Zach are referring to, just to
8 make sure I have the right one in my mind, that would be
9 helpful.

10 And we can keep going, Shawn, while they're pulling it
11 up, but -- Oh. Lori is quick.

12 MS. WOLLAN: Okay. So currently -- Can you hear
13 me?

14 MS. MARTEN: Yes, Lori.

15 MS. WOLLAN: So this is the whole Elkhorns, this
16 green area. This purplish polygon is what we have as our
17 preferred alternative. I unfortunately cannot bring up
18 the other one really quickly, but we had excluded -- In
19 the Alt B, we had had this area up here included. It
20 seems to me we removed that due to a trail, keeping a
21 trail out of there. Somebody else can perhaps speak more
22 to that.

23 MS. MARTEN: Is that the part, Al and Zach, you
24 talked about, the part where the arrow is at where it
25 shifted -- the boundaries shifted from being further north

1 to south?

2 Okay. So that's the part that's unclear why it
3 shifted, and the desire is, you know, to keep it back
4 further north.

5 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes.

6 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That helps. And then the
7 green boundary, just to make sure again I'm -- that's the
8 whole Elkhorn management area. The core area, Al, the
9 history there is that history where wilderness or proposed
10 wilderness with the wildlife management, that's where that
11 has that roadless part of it, a little bit distinctive
12 from the rest of the Elkhorn area?

13 Okay. Excellent. Thanks. That helps.

14 MS. WOLLAN: The black line is what we originally
15 proposed.

16 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So that's the shift that you
17 guys were talking about. Gotcha. Very helpful. Thank
18 you.

19 Go ahead, Shawn. Back to you to help.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Lori, for the quick work
21 there. That was really helpful to see the visual.

22 And thanks, Zach and Al, for bringing that to our
23 attention.

24 Jeff, it looks like you're next in line.

25 MR. BRADLEY: Thanks. I'm speaking on behalf of

1 the Montana Bicycle Guild now. I wanted to quickly
2 mention that the MBG does have a volunteer group with the
3 Forest Service to keep Casey Peak clear. So that's
4 something that we do to help everyone in the area,
5 speaking of the Elkhorns. So it is an area where people
6 ride and enjoy riding.

7 And I'd also just mention that we want to clarify that
8 the riding that is done in the Elkhorns, and I keep
9 looking at my other screen where I have up the IBM, really
10 is backcountry riding, where when you're biking, you're
11 probably going to be pushing your bike and you're going to
12 have to take things easy and deal with it. I have members
13 of MBG that go up and use their bicycles to hunt because
14 they can't afford to have a horse. So I would just point
15 out that there are a lot of uses when it comes to
16 bicycles, and it's not just a one-dimensional racing down
17 the hill that some people seem to feel happens.

18 I'd also add, and this applies also to conversations
19 that we had earlier, that I'm speaking to bicycles. The
20 Forest Service has defined mechanized to include other
21 things, hang gliding and whatnot, and so I'm not speaking
22 to those. So I just want to be very clear about I'm
23 speaking to bicycles, which, again, the Forest Service has
24 defined in a specific way. Thanks.

25 MS. MARTEN: Thank you, Jeff. And thanks for

1 that clarification, because you're right, mechanized is
2 not just bicycles, so being specific to bicycles is
3 helpful. Thank you.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Any other comments on this topic of
5 the Elkhorns to Leanne or questions?

6 MS. MARTEN: This has helped me. I think I've
7 got what I need between the written and, you know, ongoing
8 discussions over the last couple days.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Let me just make sure I
10 didn't miss anyone from the phone, and then I see Michael
11 just put up his hand well.

12 So anyone on the phone that I missed?

13 And then Michael. Go ahead.

14 MR. KORN: Thanks a lot, Shawn. I'm just kind of
15 getting used to this. I thought I'd clicked to have my
16 hand up and I didn't. So I'll get it.

17 I'm just speaking to basically reiterate the
18 objections that both the Elkhorn Working Group and the ERC
19 made on this. And the fundamental issue here, as far as
20 I'm concerned, and I think a number of people,
21 particularly my community at the north end, is that that
22 Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit was established, John
23 would attest to, through a lot of blood, sweat, and hard
24 work, and that it's worked for the past 30 years in the
25 context it's in. And I was disappointed in seeing in the

1 forest plan again kind of the homogenization, as was
2 mentioned, on that and that it merits specific stuff.

3 And in talking with staff of the Forest Service,
4 understanding that this forest plan is working with
5 somewhat of a different formatting method, I certainly
6 understand that. But by the same token, I found that in
7 other areas, they're far more specific, they're standards
8 rather than guidelines. And given the uniqueness and the
9 importance of this particular area, that it merited having
10 standards put in there.

11 And I guess just to make it short, in the 1986 plan,
12 when we were involved in doing that back when, it's pretty
13 straightforward, simple. I think it's a page and a half,
14 the criteria. It's something that would easily fit within
15 the current forest plan that would reiterate the nature of
16 what the wildlife management unit is, its purpose, and
17 provide the guidelines, both for the Forest Service and
18 for the general public, to maintain what it is. The
19 success of this is unquestioned, and to not have at least
20 some standards articulated there is a real problem. So
21 that's basically what I wanted to say. I think the other
22 people have covered the issue.

23 Also, in terms of the change of that boundary on the
24 north end, keep in mind that there's currently a proposal
25 that's been put on hold in regards to recreation on the

1 north end. And although that proposal is on hold by the
2 Helena District, how that map is portrayed in the forest
3 plan could affect how that does or does not take place.
4 I'm not advocating for or against it, but I think leaving
5 the boundaries as they are with that extension to the
6 north end and working from there is something that both
7 Forest Service, Fish, Wildlife & Parks, DNRC, BLM, and the
8 general public, Elkhorn Working Group, the ERC, that gives
9 us all a baseline to be working with and something we're
10 all familiar with and not something new.

11 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Michael. I appreciate it.
12 This is all very helpful.

13 Shawn, do we have any other hands you see before I
14 switch to a different area, just honoring time?

15 MR. JOHNSON: I don't, Leanne.

16 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So let me switch gears a
17 little bit. And thank you, folks. Like I said, I know
18 some of this has come up in other discussions the last
19 couple days, and I appreciate that clarification on a
20 couple of my questions there and some of that background.
21 It's all extremely helpful.

22 Badger-Two Medicine I mentioned was the standards and
23 guides, and I fully hear the concern there, that there was
24 a lot of -- seemingly a lot of the standards dropped
25 between the draft and final. I shouldn't even say

1 seemingly, they were dropped for various reasons, and
2 concern over that and what that means to that area from
3 that standpoint.

4 we've talked quite a bit the last day and a half or
5 two days on the wildlife, the connectivity, the importance
6 of the traditional cultural part of the Badger-
7 Two Medicine, motorized/mechanized. What am I missing
8 there, folks, that you haven't had an opportunity to share
9 with me? I don't have any other specific questions,
10 because they've kind of come up over the last couple days.
11 But I also don't want to just gloss over it.

12 so is there anything else with Badger-Two Medicine
13 that you want to make sure that I haven't brought forward
14 or that I'm missing here? And again, I've got your
15 written objections, so I don't need just a repeat. I just
16 want to make sure there isn't something there that came
17 out before.

18 Go ahead, Peter.

19 MR. METCALF: Hi, Leanne. I just wanted to
20 respond because a lot of those objections are from our
21 group, Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance, and others. First
22 off, I'll keep it brief, I want to thank the Forest. I
23 think they did a good job overall on Badger-Two Medicine
24 in terms of recognizing its importance, both ecologically
25 and culturally, and you've reiterated that here on the

1 meeting so far. So thank you for that.

2 I think the main concern, it wasn't that there was
3 multiple standards dropped, but it was one standard in
4 particular, and that was standard 2 on the draft plan,
5 which is about protecting the adverse effects of the
6 traditional -- or protecting against adverse effects of
7 the traditional cultural district.

8 And I just want to highlight that, even though it's in
9 our objection, because the briefing paper again makes the
10 same suggestion that the Forest has made on several
11 occasions, that it was removed because it simply repeats
12 matters of law, policy, and regulation. But that's not
13 accurate. Because Section 106 protections are procedural
14 in nature, and this standard is more substantive. So I
15 just want to make sure that that is clear and verbalize
16 that it's different there.

17 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

18 MR. METCALF: Also, I want to raise one other
19 thing that we haven't talked about. I'm hoping that the
20 Forest, after you've put in your comments and suggestions
21 to Bill Avey, will follow up with the suitability or
22 non-suitability provisions for mechanized and motorized,
23 just to ensure that any future projects or travel planning
24 is consistent and has clear direction for travel
25 management in the future with desired conditions.

1 But if you do not, I really would like to reiterate
2 that we need some better monitoring standards to ensure we
3 can track how continued mechanized use may be impacting
4 wildlife, other ecological values, conflicts with other
5 users in that area. And I submitted some suggested
6 language from the Grandview Recreation Area. So I just
7 want to highlight that for you in case you do not make
8 that recommendation or Bill Avey doesn't follow through
9 with it regarding the mechanized travel. So with that,
10 I'll end. Thank you.

11 MS. MARTEN: Thanks. Very helpful, Peter. And I
12 appreciate you clarifying the distinction there,
13 particularly with standard 2 and the view of that. That
14 is very helpful. And I know in some of the latter part of
15 your comments there, I think I saw Hilary and a few others
16 nodding their heads as well, because I know that came up
17 from a few others earlier. So I really appreciate that.

18 I think I had another hand up here, but I don't know
19 who, Shawn.

20 MR. JOHNSON: That's all right. Sarah
21 Lundstrum's hand is up.

22 Sarah, do you want to jump in?

23 MS. LUNDSTRUM: Yes. First off, I want to just
24 sort of back up and reiterate Peter's comments. I think
25 they're important in that idea of procedural versus

1 additive protection, the idea being you consult with the
2 Blackfeet and then opt to go ahead with an alternative or
3 a project that does adversely affect the TCD.

4 And while I don't think this administration and this
5 forest supervisor would do that, I do think that we have
6 to plan for the future; that we're not just planning for
7 what we have right now in terms of management, but also
8 future management. And so putting that standard back in
9 protects the TCD in a way that just the procedural
10 requirements of Section 106 don't.

11 And I'm looking at it into the future of as the world
12 changes, we don't know what's going to happen, and so
13 let's take the steps now to protect that traditional
14 cultural area while we have the opportunity with this
15 forest plan and not realize that we should have done that
16 later. So it's kind of a let's look to the future and
17 really protect it instead of just doing it partway.

18 MS. MARTEN: Very helpful. I appreciate that.
19 That puts a lot of context and a different lens that you
20 are looking at this through in your written comment. So
21 that helps. Thank you.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Great, Sarah. Appreciate that.
23 Peter, did you want to jump back in?

24 MR. METCALF: Yeah, just real quick, I wanted to
25 add. Thank you for the opportunity, Shawn and Leanne.

1 The other thing it does that I didn't mention is it
2 really rounds out some of the other components that the
3 Forest has in there in terms of ensuring that consultation
4 with the Blackfeet has some meaning and in terms of plan
5 direction. So I think it helps in that area as well, and
6 I know the Forest wants to make good steps in that
7 direction with their relationship working with the tribe,
8 and I think that standard helps ensure that they'll do so.

9 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great.

10 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Anyone else that you
11 either want to raise your hand electronically or just
12 signal that you have a comment?

13 Anyone on the phone?

14 Not seeing anyone else, Leanne.

15 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thank you, folks. Very
16 helpful and great context to see the objections a little
17 bit differently than what I was interpreting on a couple
18 of them. So thank you. Extremely helpful.

19 So let's go to the third area here this afternoon, and
20 that's the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. And
21 I know that there is a lot of different perspectives on
22 that as well. But one of the things that I want to
23 acknowledge, and I know, Greg, I think this came up in
24 discussions with you and your objection, and I'm not sure
25 if others did as well.

1 But I think folks are aware there is a letter that was
2 signed by myself and three other regional foresters
3 where -- The Continental Divide Trail obviously crosses
4 multiple states and multiple regions of the Forest
5 Service. And I know that there is some confusion on that
6 letter and how it's used. And so what I wanted to just
7 clarify, and then if it's not clear in the documentation,
8 that if we need to, I'd like to hear that. That was a
9 starting point to get dialogue going, trying to look at
10 some consistencies, but it's all based on public
11 engagement.

12 So it was not meant as a decision. It's just guidance
13 that we started out with, but that is not a decision
14 document from that perspective. But it was used as a
15 starting point, and then the process, the planning process
16 has evolved, and proposals coming out in Bill Avey's
17 recommended record of decision and all of that based on
18 engagement and the whole process from that standpoint.

19 So Greg, I know you've had many discussions on this
20 with Timory and others. And there's different views on
21 that, so I'm not saying yours is right or wrong. I just
22 wanted to put that out for the group because I know a
23 couple others have brought that up.

24 But Continental Divide Trail, there is a desire to
25 have a lot more components in the forest plan, and there's

1 letters of written examples of that, which we really
2 appreciate, we're taking a hard look at. But what else do
3 I need to know on that that I may be missing from that
4 perspective?

5 And I'm going to start with Greg because I know he's
6 just dying to get a voice in here, if I could, Greg. And
7 again, I don't need a repeat of all your written
8 objections because we've got that, but other things you
9 just want to make sure that I have, by all means, and then
10 Shawn can help me facilitate with a few others here.

11 MR. WARREN: Yeah. Hi, everyone. I recognize a
12 lot of the names on this call. It really makes me realize
13 how much I miss Montana. I lived in Missoula many years
14 and Kalispell. Al, I think about the Danaher when I see
15 you. Wish we were out there right now.

16 So I've been working on national trails since the
17 '80s, 1980s, and I also worked with others on the
18 development of the recreation opportunity spectrum
19 handbook. And so my history with the Forest Service goes
20 back many decades.

21 Something I have done since retirement from the
22 U.S. Forest Service, I continue an interest in working
23 with others on protecting national scenic trails. I
24 decided not to also try to talk about national historic
25 trails; I think they're a little different. So I've been

1 working on strategies and with others on how do we
2 maintain connectivity for people and wildlife along these
3 national trail corridors, whether it's the Appalachian
4 Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, or the Continental Divide
5 Trail.

6 Many of my comments are really technical, so to try to
7 simplify that, kind of my vision across different BLM
8 units, National Forest System units, Park Service, you
9 know, just to summarize, I think it's important to
10 recognize the corridor. In the case of the Forest
11 Service, the best way to do that is have a management
12 area. And that's actually required in the Forest Service
13 manual for the Continental Divide Trail. I know there's
14 discussion on whether it's required or just recommended,
15 but right now it does say in the current Forest Service
16 Manual 2350 that we need a corridor, it should be a
17 management area.

18 And why a management area? I think if it's just
19 described as some type of loose corridor, you get in a
20 situation like in the Helena plan where you look at, well,
21 how many acres are in the national scenic trail corridor?
22 There's none listed. So you really start -- people start
23 thinking of the national trail as just a trail. Yeah,
24 it's nice to have good trail maintenance and snags, hazard
25 trees removed, but what's really experienced along a

1 national scenic trail? why is it different than a regular
2 trail?

3 I think you have to look at the setting and setting to
4 use an ROS. Using the original principles of the
5 recreation opportunity spectrum is the primitive and
6 semi-primitive non-motorized experience is the vision for
7 what I believe the intent of the legislation was. And
8 right along with that, you look at, well, what's the
9 scenery along that trail? Not only the setting, part of
10 that is the scenery and the dynamics of that scenery. And
11 again, we have policy direction where scenic integrity
12 objectives should be very high or high.

13 And those two things are missing -- or three things
14 are missing on the Helena. There's not a clear corridor.
15 The management area isn't well-defined. Even I think in
16 the draft or in the GIS data, it shows a high scenic
17 integrity level along the trail, but in the maps for the
18 plan, that disappeared. So there's inconsistencies there
19 between the data used for the plan and what actually ended
20 up in the recommended decision.

21 I think we have a lot of -- indirectly or directly, we
22 have great connectivity and experience people are seeking,
23 you know, basically on the north two-thirds of the Lewis
24 and Clark and Helena National Forests. But then we get to
25 the west of Helena, and everything just kind of falls

1 apart. We run right into a timber management area. The
2 CDNST travel route is on roads, it's being managed for
3 timber production. And if we're really going to have a
4 national trail that connects from Canada to Mexico, I
5 think the plans need to have a better strategy, better
6 direction for how to address those roadblocks.

7 You know, whether you're closing down the CDNST for
8 people hiking or riding their bikes, traveling along that
9 because of a timber sale, that could be a substantial
10 interference. Or if you're going through just the areas
11 being managed road modified or -- I'm a little confused
12 here whether semi-primitive motorized is also being used
13 for timber production. I'm used to having road and
14 modified ROS classes for that.

15 So anyway, again, real quickly, a summary, I think
16 there's still the option to clearly define the corridor in
17 the final decision, include the nature and purposes of the
18 CDNST as a desired condition, and to clearly state what is
19 the desired ROS setting, to establish what is the desired
20 scenic integrity objective along the CDNST trail route.
21 So in a quick summary, that's kind of my thoughts. So any
22 questions?

23 MS. MARTEN: No. Extremely helpful, Greg. I
24 really appreciate that, and it puts some context on your
25 written objection again. So thank you very much on that

1 part of it.

2 I think we had another hand up, but I'm not sure who
3 it was, Shawn.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. John Gatchell has offered to
5 weigh in too with some additional context.

6 So John, do you want to jump in?

7 MS. MARTEN: Great.

8 MR. GATCHELL: I think this is a really important
9 aspect of this plan. And in general, I think the Forest
10 has adopted, wisely adopted the elements that are in your
11 letter, Leanne, signed by all the regional foresters,
12 which actually are based on the Continental Divide
13 National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan, which I think of
14 as the plan that articulates the statutory purposes of the
15 trail. The purposes of the trail are not just recreation.
16 They are primitive recreation and they are conservation of
17 the corridor.

18 So I think Greg's point is a good one and worth
19 looking at how the plan could better deal with it west of
20 Helena in particular. But in general, I think the plan
21 has done a good job, has done a very good job on the
22 Continental Divide corridor in terms of allocations that
23 are consistent with the purposes of the Continental Divide
24 National Scenic Trail, both its recreation purposes and
25 its conservation purposes. In particular, there's clear

1 direction in the comprehensive plan that recommended
2 wilderness needs to be managed unimpaired. And this plan
3 does that, and it does that in ways that I think are
4 win/win for a variety of users.

5 So I want to say that I think it's the best plan I've
6 looked at in Montana in terms of the Continental Divide
7 National Scenic Trail, and I think that's greatly
8 appreciated.

9 MS. MARTEN: Great.

10 MR. GATCHELL: The part of your direction that's
11 based on the comprehensive plan has to be followed, and I
12 think we'd like to see, you know, the largest forest,
13 which is the Beaverhead, reach out and pick up similar
14 direction.

15 But I want to compliment the planning team here for
16 adopting the recommendations in your letter that are
17 well-founded here and for adopting a plan that protects
18 recommended wilderness, provides other opportunities in
19 other areas, including mountain biking, where it's
20 appropriate. So...

21 MS. MARTEN: Great. Hey, thank you, John. I
22 appreciate it.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, appreciate it, John.

24 We've got a few more hands up, Leanne, so I'm going to
25 get to those folks, and then maybe we'll circle back to

1 you and check in on where you are.

2 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

3 MR. JOHNSON: So let's go to Tom, and then, Jeff,
4 and then Jordan.

5 So Tom.

6 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. Thank you very much. On
7 behalf of AFRC, I certainly don't want to take away
8 anything about the importance and use of the Continental
9 Divide National Trail. I've been up there in a few areas,
10 and it's really enjoyable.

11 I just want to speak about what I have seen in some of
12 the areas I've visited, particularly where the trail goes
13 through a project that was called the Telegraph Project on
14 the forest. And, you know, you have a forest up there
15 that's basically 80 percent dead from lodgepole pine, and,
16 obviously, at some point at some distance away from the
17 trail, there needs to be some management to try to help
18 fend off large wildfires or hazards accompanied by that.

19 And I just encourage the Forest to look at the best
20 option for maintaining the integrity of the trail, but yet
21 allowing for some types of management at a distance that's
22 appropriate, to where we can provide some of the safety
23 requirements needed to make sure we don't get people
24 trapped on the trail in a big wildfire or something along
25 those lines. I think, you know, that plays into what the

1 visuals for the trails are and how far a distance we need
2 to consider for visuals for the trails.

3 But I think there can be a balance. I think you need
4 to look at all the folks interested in it and certainly
5 not to do anything to take away from the characteristics
6 of the trail, but look at the other aspects. And that's
7 really the only point I wanted to bring up. Thank you.

8 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Tom.

9 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thanks, Tom.

10 Jeff, do you want to jump in?

11 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah. So I guess some of them
12 were -- I had a couple questions I think not really to be
13 answered today, but more concerns. And one of those was
14 if there was a corridor identified, would that cause issue
15 when areas of the trail were to be rerouted as they've
16 been done down near, like, Joe Bowers Pass and some of the
17 stuff that's happened down there, which I think has been
18 an improvement on the trail.

19 And then another thing that pops into my mind that I
20 think sort of is along the lines of what Tom Partin was
21 just mentioning is, you know, the ability -- or would some
22 of the suggestions mentioned in the objection limit the
23 ability to deal with dead and dying timber? And this
24 spring was a really good example of that, where myself and
25 my wife -- actually, this picture behind me is part of the

1 CDT where we're out there clearing it. And that was
2 exactly a week after we had gone out and cleared it the
3 first time. There was a very nasty windstorm. There were
4 a few people that were actually trapped out in one of the
5 parks up on the top trying to wait for it to die down so
6 that they could get down safely.

7 And in some of the discussions I've had with some of
8 the recreation folks on the forest, we've been talking
9 about whether there's an ability to do something so we're
10 not going out there and spending eight solid hours with
11 three chainsaws to clear three miles of trail. So I think
12 that's sort of just a consideration that I wanted to
13 mention for the portions that am I on and recreate on.
14 Thanks.

15 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Jeff. Great perspective and
16 great questions. Really appreciate that.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Go ahead, Jordan.

18 MR. REEVES: Yeah, hi. Jordan Reeves,
19 representing the Upper Blackfoot Working Group. And I
20 just want to be clear, our group did not object on this
21 topic, but just in listening to the conversation, I
22 thought it might be helpful to provide some relevant
23 context related to our proposal in this discussion.

24 So one thing that I just wanted folks to be aware of,
25 the community of Lincoln, in the last two or three years,

1 stepped up and partnered with, and I'm going to get the
2 name wrong, it's the Continental Divide Coalition. It's
3 an organization that sort of works with communities up and
4 down the trail. And Lincoln, through their Chamber of
5 Commerce, became the first community, the first
6 Continental Divide Gateway Community in Montana.

7 That's a status in which the community sort of
8 embraces their connection to the trail and works hard, you
9 know, on trail improvements and folks coming through on
10 the trail. And I think it was just an interesting signal
11 of how the community is tied to that trail and just how
12 they're thinking about it in terms of their future. And
13 then I think other Montana communities have followed suit.
14 So there is an important sort of heritage and economic
15 link there between communities and the trail.

16 The other thing I'd mention is our proposal has very
17 large segments of the Continental Divide Trail in it.
18 We've already discussed the Nevada Mountain Recommended
19 wilderness. There's another, I want to say, 40-to-50-mile
20 section of the trail between Flesher and Rogers Pass that
21 is, in our proposal, a conservation management area that
22 would protect the scenic and non-motorized recreation
23 values there, would allow mountain bikes as per
24 collaborative agreements dating back to the travel plan.

25 So I just wanted to call those out. In the specific

1 case to Lincoln, I think there are opportunities to think
2 about the trail as a corridor. It does have important
3 values for communities, and there are different, you know,
4 management prescriptions that could fit there. So thank
5 you.

6 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Jordan.

7 MR. JOHNSON: All right. That was all the hands
8 that I saw. Did I miss anyone?

9 Okay. Randy, your hand is up. And then if anyone
10 else wants to jump in, be sure to raise your hand and
11 we'll get to you next.

12 Randy, go ahead.

13 MR. GRAY: Leanne, this is just a process
14 observation. Having watched 50-plus participants
15 representing an immense variety of positions on public
16 lands, comparing that to the so-called presidential debate
17 last night, I'm just suggesting that when you retire from
18 this current job, when you run for president, count me in,
19 please.

20 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Randy. But I can guarantee
21 you it ain't gonna happen.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Randy. Appreciate the
23 comment.

24 Zach, do you want to weigh in?

25 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah. I just wanted to say real

1 quick, MWA feels strongly -- and this isn't really about
2 any of the designated areas we've talked about today, but
3 wilderness study areas, which is also a designated area,
4 or a couple designated areas on the forest, that the
5 Forest really needs to look at some of their language that
6 they used and really stick strictly to the statute of the
7 wilderness study area law and the decisions made by the
8 Ninth Circuit in the past. You read our objections on the
9 subject, I'm sure. I just wanted to make sure and clarify
10 that we feel strongly that the current forest plan as
11 written is not really acceptable.

12 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Thanks, Zach. I appreciate
13 that.

14 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah. Thank you.

15 MS. MARTEN: So Shawn, if I'm not missing another
16 hand, do you want me to kind of --

17 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Why don't you capture your
18 thoughts here, Leanne, and then we can circle around one
19 more time maybe for any last comments, and then we can
20 close this one out and move towards our summary for the
21 day.

22 MS. MARTEN: Okay. We can do that. So yeah,
23 folks, if there is something you think of, by all means,
24 just raise your hand.

25 So again, just many thanks. I appreciate all the

1 dialogue, the willingness to bring up the points, your
2 patience with my questions, and just the spectrum of
3 diversity that I'm hearing.

4 what I didn't hear that was different is we've got
5 some really special places across the Helena-Lewis and
6 Clark National Forest, and the forest in its entirety is
7 special, but then there's some even special places within
8 the designation and proclamation boundaries, and
9 Badger-Two Medicine, Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, and
10 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail are three of
11 them. There's many more.

12 The passion is there. The need to have clarification,
13 the need to have more distinct visible noted wording in
14 the plan on some of the desires within these special areas
15 is part of what I'm hearing. And that's across all
16 three of these areas. If it's somewhere there and not
17 evident, we need to do a better job of making it evident.
18 And if it's missing, I'm hearing that there's a gap there
19 that somehow we need to fill from that perspective.

20 Some of them are changes that were made between the
21 old plan and new plan, some of them between draft and
22 final, and some are our interpretation that's already a
23 law, regulation, or policy, but I heard some different
24 context and some different lenses to see that a little
25 differently on a couple of the standards that we removed

1 where we were thinking duplicity. And the view that I
2 heard some of you express is you weren't reading it that
3 way. So good context for us to keep in mind as we're
4 thinking through these. So really appreciate it.

5 It helps to have the maps up, so thank you again,
6 Lori, for pulling that up every once in a while on some of
7 those so I can visually see which boundaries and shifting
8 that folks were referencing. So that's just, again, part
9 of what I need visually at times from that standpoint.

10 I don't have any other questions at this time. I
11 think I got my questions answered between today and then,
12 of course, the written objections that came in.

13 So Shawn, I'm going to let you tell me if there's
14 other hands that are up or help us facilitate through to
15 the next step, if you would, please.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, I don't see any other hands.
17 Let me just make a last call for those who are calling in
18 today. Does anyone have any comments that they would like
19 to make if you're an objector or an interested party
20 that's just called in for today?

21 All right. So not hearing any, Leanne, I think we can
22 move on to our summary for the day overall. So this is a
23 chance to do a little bit more of what you've just done,
24 but maybe at a higher level, a 30,000-foot level of the
25 synopsis and any key things that you want to draw out or

1 just provide a little bit more summary, especially as we
2 think about next steps and what happens after the
3 objection meeting. And then we'll close out today by just
4 a quick preview of our agenda tomorrow and go from there.

5 I'd also just say that it is nice, during this last
6 session, for Leanne to have an audience. So if people are
7 willing to stay on their video, that's great; or if people
8 who have not had their video on want to join us for this
9 last session, this is just a little bit of the summary of
10 the day and looking ahead to tomorrow. So you're welcome
11 to join us by video if you'd like.

12 MS. MARTEN: Great. Hey, thanks, Shawn.

13 And thank you, everyone. I know there's been
14 different pockets of folks that have been objectors and
15 designated interested persons on the agenda topics, but as
16 I've been looking at the Participants list, we've had
17 50-plus people sticking with us all day listening, and
18 members of the public. And so just really appreciate it.
19 It's a lot to sit through. You guys are taking it all out
20 of your personal lives and your daily lives to make time
21 for this, and you have been all throughout the process.
22 But just to stick with us in a virtual format particularly
23 is very much appreciated.

24 And for some of you, I know it gave you the
25 opportunity because you didn't have to travel in. We've

1 had people from New York and across the nation that are
2 joining us too. So not only is it for those of us that
3 are Montanans who live in Montana, but, you know, it's a
4 special place for the American public. And so just really
5 appreciate the opportunity to listen, to learn, put some
6 faces at least on the screen. And thanks for those of you
7 being willing to be on camera so I'm not just talking to a
8 black box or myself, which is really disorienting if you
9 do that on an all-day basis. And some of you, I could see
10 beautiful fall weather out in the background too, so I'm
11 really envious to see some of you sitting in the sunshine.
12 Good for you, getting outdoors. And Sara is nodding her
13 head because she knows what I'm looking at there.

14 But it was great discussion today. Similar to what I
15 just summarized on the last topic, is I heard a lot of
16 great suggestions and insight on standards, guidelines,
17 some very special areas. We started out talking
18 motorized/mechanized use and suitability in different
19 areas across the Helena-Lewis and Clark and thoughts on
20 that. Tied to recreation use, absolutely, but beyond
21 that, it's tied to wildlife and the connectivity and the
22 diversity and vegetation management and wildfire. And,
23 you know, it is a whole big picture of multiple use.
24 Mining. You know, so it is truly trying to figure out how
25 to meet the multiple uses that the American people desire

1 from their public lands that we're managing on their
2 behalf.

3 And so trying to take all that into perspective, but
4 really helping me see it through your lens and where
5 you're sitting and your uses and your depth of experience
6 has been extremely helpful. And then that rolls into just
7 proposed boundaries for specifically recommended
8 wilderness, wilderness, and wilderness study areas. All
9 these areas bring out a lot of passion and values, and for
10 all the right reasons.

11 So again, just helping me see. Because there is no
12 right or wrong answer. There is no right or wrong number
13 or percentage of the land base that's designated certain
14 ways. But it's really trying to take into account the
15 engagement of all of you working with other agencies,
16 working with our partners, working with other nations,
17 tribal nations, taking all that into account into that big
18 picture. So it just helps round it out for me. And then,
19 of course, moving into at least three of these other
20 different designations for Badger-Two Medicine, the
21 Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, and the Continental
22 Divide National Scenic Trail just kind of ties that all
23 in. So building up to a lot of it and the continuity.

24 And the way the agendas have been set up and the flow
25 of it, at least for me, thanks to the team behind the

1 scenes that put that order. Because they have been --
2 they overlap, but they build on each other, and it's
3 helped me just continue to build on that picture as I'm
4 working on my response to Forest Supervisor Avey. So many
5 thanks.

6 We have another day, some other topics coming up
7 tomorrow. Some of you will be joining, I know, some may
8 not. But just to let you know, the next steps in this
9 after we get through the rest of the meetings tomorrow is
10 really working on finalizing my response to Forest
11 Supervisor Avey on the objections. We're looking at doing
12 that this fall. Several of you are involved and very
13 passionate about the Custer Gallatin revision, and we're
14 going into objection review meetings on those in another
15 month. Some of these topics are connected a little bit
16 geographically, but also in some other ways, so we're
17 being purposeful about that, but, obviously, there are
18 distinct landscapes and ecosystems as well from that
19 standpoint. But we are very purposeful, very cognitive
20 about timing of this and what we're looking at.

21 But my response to Forest Supervisor Avey, you will
22 see that. It will be published. And as I mentioned, it
23 will include a response to all the objection issues,
24 whether we've talked about it over the last couple days or
25 tomorrow, maybe not necessarily line by line, point by

1 point, but at least in a summary, because there are
2 similar ones. So you will see my response that will go to
3 Forest Supervisor Avey, and then that will start outlining
4 the next steps from that point on that. So that will be
5 out this fall.

6 And other than that, I'm going to turn it back over to
7 Shawn to maybe just line up a little bit for tomorrow for
8 those of you interested on what's on the agenda. And then
9 we will cut everybody loose to go and enjoy a beautiful
10 day the rest of your day.

11 So Shawn, let me turn it back over to you -- Stop.
12 Pause. Back up.

13 Sara, let me turn it over to you, if you have any last
14 words, and then we'll turn it over to Shawn.

15 So my apologies, Sara.

16 MS. MAYBEN: No worries. Thanks, Leanne.

17 I just appreciate everybody sticking with us. It can
18 be kind of long and tedious in this format, and so I
19 appreciate folks taking the time, providing the input to
20 Leanne to help us, you know, maybe shape a different
21 decision, depending on what she comes back with. So
22 again, thank you, everyone. I appreciate the time.

23 And thanks to the team for being in the background and
24 Lori for pulling up great maps and et cetera. And thanks
25 to Shawn for facilitating our group.

1 To you, Shawn.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you so much, Sara.

3 And just my word of thanks to everyone too, beyond the
4 substance, which you all have navigated so well. And
5 Leanne, thank you for guiding us through that conversation
6 and really asking some good questions that seek that
7 clarity.

8 I recognize how odd it is that we're all joining this
9 way. But you guys have navigated this space really well
10 and have been really clear in your communications. You've
11 been really excellent in your use of the technology. It's
12 gone better than I could have imagined. So just thank you
13 so much for navigating the process so effectively
14 technology-wise and with such great respect for each other
15 in terms of just giving each other space and listening
16 carefully to what everyone is contributing to the
17 conversation.

18 Just to look ahead to tomorrow, we've got a very
19 similar format time-wise, but the topics again are
20 different. So we'll start again with a preview of the
21 day, some opening remarks just framing what these
22 objection meetings are intended to achieve. That will be
23 from 9:00 to 9:30. We will begin our first topic at
24 10:00 a.m. tomorrow. That is going to be focused on
25 conservation watershed network issues as well as

1 downstream water uses. At 11:00, we'll switch to timber,
2 sustained yield, and reforestation. Lunch tomorrow is
3 from noon to 1:30, and then our last hour tomorrow, from
4 1:30 to 2:30, will feature range-related issues. And then
5 we'll close with a similar summary as we did today.

6 So that's the look ahead for tomorrow, and I guess
7 we'll just close by saying thanks again. And if you have
8 any feedback on anything we can do differently, we
9 certainly welcome that feedback. You can either drop us a
10 line to either Cody or Timory. Their contact information
11 is in the chat box. Or if you want to stay on just now
12 for an extra minute and share any feedback with me, I'd be
13 glad to have it.

14 Otherwise, that's it for the day. Really appreciate
15 your time. We look forward to seeing some of you
16 tomorrow, if you can join, and if not, enjoy this fall
17 weather. We really picked a nice fall week for weather to
18 all be sitting in front of our screens.

19 But thanks again, all.

20 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, everyone.

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1 CONSERVATION WATERSHED NETWORK, BULL TROUT,
2 AND DOWNSTREAM WATER USES

3 Thursday, October 1, 2020, 9:00 a.m. - 10:54 a.m.

4 A P P E A R A N C E S

5 FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

6 FOREST SERVICE:

7 LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer

8 SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor

9 DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader

10 LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist

11 SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds

12 WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist

13 AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist

14 KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds

15 ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses

16 LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor

17 JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff

18 CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist

19 TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner

20 CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator

21 ERIC ARCHER, Fishery biologist

22 OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

23 AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.

24 TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council

25 PETE NELSON, Defenders of wildlife

AL CHASE, Cascade Cons. Dist./Sun River Watershed

LEE SIGNALNESS, Fort Shaw Irrigation District

ERLING JUEL, Greenfields Irrigation District

AL ROLLO, Great Falls

BRYAN LORENZO, Montana Logging Association

ANDY JOHNSON, Independent miner

1 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, everyone. It's
2 9:00 a.m., and welcome to our third day of the
3 Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest land management
4 plan objection meeting resolutions -- or objection
5 resolution meetings. Glad to be with you all again this
6 morning. Welcome to anyone that's just joining us for the
7 first time.

8 My name is Shawn Johnson, and I'm with the University
9 of Montana. I'll be helping facilitate today's meeting,
10 and I'm really glad to be with all of you here this
11 morning.

12 Just a few things as we get started here to orient us
13 to the day and orient us to the technology that we're
14 using to connect. This is likely a really common platform
15 for many of you now using Zoom or some other virtual
16 format, but just a few things to orient us as we get
17 started.

18 Starting with the upper right-hand corner of your
19 screen, you'll see a toggle to switch between Speaker View
20 and Gallery View. You use that to provide the view that
21 you would like to engage with this morning. It's up to
22 you. What we would ask is as you're speaking as either an
23 objector or interested party, please have your videocamera
24 on so that we can see you and engage in conversation with
25 you, a similar way to how we would do it if we were all

1 sitting around the table together.

2 I do want to just orient you to the features on the
3 bottom of your screen as well. Most of these are pretty
4 obvious, but there are a couple that we really want to
5 highlight. Your Mute button on your lower left is a
6 toggle on and off. We'd just ask that you remain on mute
7 when you're not speaking, and that just helps to ensure
8 that we can all see and hear one another. The video,
9 again, when you're in a meeting or in conversation with
10 the regional forester and deputy forest supervisor, we'd
11 ask that you have your video on. If you're just watching,
12 you can just leave your video off and observe the
13 conversation.

14 One of the important buttons here is the Participants
15 button at the bottom. So if you click on the Participants
16 button, what that does is open a separate field, separate
17 window on your screen that will list the participants and,
18 importantly at the bottom, provide people an opportunity
19 to virtually raise your hand. And so as we get into
20 conversation, that will be a key feature.

21 We will also be periodically using the Chat function
22 at the bottom. So you'll see there in the chat box, if
23 you look in there right now, I'm just going to drop in
24 some basic information about today's meeting. This also
25 gives you a chance to check out the features of Zoom and

1 see how well you're able to utilize the Rename feature.
2 So you can rename yourself by clicking on the three dots
3 in the blue field in the upper right-hand corner of your
4 Zoom box. I'd invite everyone that's able to do that to
5 go ahead now and click on that field, and then select
6 Rename, and go ahead put your full name in there, your
7 first name, last name, and your organization if you have
8 one. If not, that's fine.

9 Also in the Chat, you'll see that I dropped
10 information for members of the press that might be joining
11 us today. So for those media inquiries, please be in
12 touch with Chiara. Her information is provided, both
13 e-mail and phone. And then if you need technical
14 assistance today, Cody and Timory are on standby to help
15 with those questions, so please contact Cody Hutchinson or
16 Timory Peel using the contact information provided there.

17 I do want to go over some ground rules and an
18 introduction to our agenda later today, but I want to
19 start by introducing a little bit more about the format
20 for today and who has joined us. And so I'd like to start
21 by introducing Sara Mayben, the deputy forest supervisor,
22 and her team.

23 So good morning, Sara.

24 MS. MAYBEN: Good morning.

25 Good morning, everybody. My name is Sara Mayben. I'm

1 the deputy forest supervisor on the Helena-Lewis and Clark
2 National Forest. I am sitting in for Bill Avey. He has
3 just returned from the special fire assignment, so he is
4 taking a couple days off, well-deserved, and so I'll be
5 covering this for him like I have for the last two days.
6 I want to welcome you, and I also want to introduce our
7 team.

8 So team members, please turn on your computers so
9 everybody can see your face. Deb Entwistle is our team
10 leader. Lori Wollan serves as a GIS person. Kyle Schmitt
11 has done range and weeds. Wendy Clark is on as our
12 wildlife biologist. I see Liz Smith is also on; she's
13 been the writer/editor. Eric Archer is on; he's been the
14 fishery biologist. And I'm trying to see if there's
15 anybody else.

16 I don't see anybody else, but we do have other team
17 members. They've been doing a fantastic job, so I want to
18 thank them. And I also want to thank you all for joining
19 us today.

20 Thanks, Shawn.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Sarah, and
22 thanks to the team. I know it's been a big process and a
23 of number of years putting this plan together and really
24 listening to the public throughout that process, trying to
25 bring together all of their insights as you build a plan

1 for what's next for the Helena-Lewis and Clark.

2 with that, I'd like to turn it over to Leanne Marten
3 for an introduction of both herself and a little bit about
4 the process and the conversation we're going to have
5 today.

6 And from that, Leanne, I'll go into some basic ground
7 rules and I'll look at our agenda. So over to you,
8 Leanne.

9 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Shawn.

10 Good morning, everyone, and thanks, everyone, for
11 joining us this morning. As Shawn said, I'm
12 Leanne Marten. I am the regional forester here in the
13 Northern Region. And for today and the last couple days,
14 I'm the objection reviewing officer for Forest Supervisor
15 Avey's proposed record of decision and forest plan
16 revision on the Helena-Lewis and Clark. So great to be
17 here again.

18 For some of you that have joined us over the last
19 couple days, I'm going to be giving a little bit of an
20 overview, some objectives, how we got to where we're at
21 today, and it's going to be a repeat, so my apologies. I
22 know we've had people coming and going in the virtual
23 format at different days and different topic agendas, so I
24 just want to make sure that if you're new and you haven't
25 had an opportunity to have this background, that I share

1 that.

2 So how did we get to where we're at? The Helena-Lewis
3 and Clark draft plan and revision, we received, give or
4 take, around 150 objectors on the plan, with a little over
5 120 unique issues that were brought up. And as you're
6 fully aware, not all of those have been on the agenda over
7 the last three days, and here's why. We have read through
8 and we've had a panel on the forest, we've had a panel on
9 the region, and we've actually had a panel of employees
10 that I asked to come in and help review from completely
11 outside the region that have not worked on the
12 Helena-Lewis and Clark forest plan revision, to really
13 take a hard look at all the written objections that were
14 received, the issues, and really dive into it.

15 So being briefed on that, we've read through them, but
16 there were some of those that I just need some help
17 understanding the context, understanding what you as
18 objectors and interested persons are really getting at,
19 and those are the ones that we put on the agenda. There's
20 not going to be set decisions being made on any of those
21 today. There hasn't been over the last couple days. It's
22 really giving me an opportunity to hear from you and see
23 it through your lens and, more importantly, giving you an
24 opportunity to listen and have dialogue amongst yourselves
25 on the concerns and any proposed remedies and what that

1 may or may not look like in your eyes and how folks are
2 seeing those proposed remedies.

3 So today, we've got several agenda topics we'll go
4 through, and I will do my best, with Shawn's brilliant
5 help as a facilitator, to help with the dialogue. I've
6 got some questions for each of the topics to kind of kick
7 it off. But then, really just ask that you keep in mind
8 my questions are not intended in any way to say one
9 person's right, one person's wrong. Don't read too much
10 into them as if I'm leaning one way or the other. It's
11 really me just trying to tease things out and get a better
12 understanding.

13 I also fully understand that all of you have been
14 putting a lot of time into the efforts and engaging on the
15 revision, and we can't do it without you. We have the
16 honor and privilege of managing the National Forest System
17 lands on your behalf. They're the public's. And so your
18 interest and your willingness to be engaged is exactly
19 what we need. And I really, really honor and want to
20 honor your time you're taking out of your daily lives to
21 even be engaged in the objections on top of all the other
22 engagement you've already put into this plan.

23 So I don't want to say anything that offends anybody
24 or comes across that I'm trying to ask you to change your
25 values, either your personal or your organizational

1 values. So if my questions seem that way, please be
2 patient with me, that it's not the intent. I would never
3 ask you to ever change your own personal values or your
4 organizational values with that. I know how personal some
5 of this is, and I know lots of it is very much values and
6 emotions, and people have some real ownership. And I just
7 want to make sure that what I'm doing is just taken as
8 it's meant, being curious in the mode of inquiries, trying
9 to learn and understand better to make an informed thought
10 process in my final response to Forest Supervisor Avey on
11 the objections from that standpoint.

12 so if there's clarity needed or things that you know
13 are wrong, by all means, jump in at that point, raise your
14 hand. Shawn will go over some of that for you and some of
15 the process part. But we really need that as well. So if
16 I'm not clear, ask questions so we can make sure that
17 we're on the same page as we're having the dialogue.

18 I think with that, Shawn, I'll turn it back over to
19 you to go over some of the ground rules and the logistics.
20 And then when we jump into the topics, hopefully some of
21 this will be a little clearer for folks that haven't been
22 part of it the last couple days and may be just joining us
23 for the first time this morning.

24 And Sara, if I forgot anything, please jump in.

25 But thanks, folks. I look forward to the day. It

1 will be great dialogue, and I really look forward to
2 seeing some other faces on the screen. Can't be
3 face-to-face, but at least we can do it in the virtual
4 world, which is nice.

5 So all yours, Shawn.

6 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thank you, Leanne.
7 Great to have that context for today and a little bit of
8 the background about how we got to where we are and just a
9 good overview of what we hope to accomplish here later
10 today.

11 I'm going to go ahead and share my screen here for a
12 moment and just go over a couple of things visually with
13 you. It looks like most people have their video off, so
14 it will be a good time to have some slides up there so we
15 don't have to look at blank boxes here. So let me make
16 sure I'm sharing this here, get the settings set up. It
17 just takes a while here for my computer to get everything
18 going, but hopefully it's all set now.

19 All right. So it looks like everyone is seeing that
20 screen, just a cover slide there to get started. This was
21 the information that was shared as we were getting going
22 and was in the chat box too. But just a reminder that if
23 everyone would go ahead and rename themselves in their
24 Zoom box, that just gives us a sense of who has joined us
25 today and who you're connected with. And I think that's

1 really helpful, not just for members of the Forest Service
2 that are helping lead today's conversation but so we have
3 a sense of who one another are.

4 There's contact information here for press inquiry, so
5 please be in touch with Chiara. And if you need technical
6 assistance, please be in touch with either Cody or Timory.

7 I also wanted to note that in the chat box, I dropped
8 a link to some closed captioning -- or to a closed
9 captioning link. That's being provided today by an
10 outside service, and we're lucky to have that. And for
11 those that need it, what you need to do is just click on
12 that link. It will open another box for you to be able to
13 follow along with today's conversation.

14 I wanted to also go over just a few basic ground rules
15 for today. And I think for the most part, we don't even
16 need to go over these, but they really build around the
17 core purpose that Leanne shared with us earlier today
18 about really understanding what's at stake, what's at the
19 heart of some of the objections that were brought forward
20 with this draft plan, and how do we think about providing
21 clarity around what those issues and concerns are and
22 building understanding around them so that we can think
23 about potential remedies as we move forward.

24 To do that, we really need to build in time and space
25 to listen to one another and really hear and respect those

1 diverse perspectives, and so just ask that we do that and
2 focus on building that understanding. We'll do that today
3 by asking questions and really trying to probe some
4 different dimensions of the issues that are out there.

5 As we do so, and just recognizing that we're in this
6 virtual space and using this virtual platform, please
7 speak clearly and slowly. That will help us all
8 understand one another. We also have a transcriptionist
9 that's helping us capture the conversation, and it will
10 help her capture the conversation as well. And let's just
11 be patient with each other as we work through this. There
12 are lot of distractions in our lives right now, and we
13 really appreciate the time that everyone carved out to be
14 a part of this conversation.

15 Just a couple of minor things, not necessarily ground
16 rules, but some best practices here. When you are
17 speaking for the first time and you have a chance to
18 introduce yourself as an objector or interested person on
19 the topic that you're here to speak with Leanne about
20 today, please just introduce yourself as you begin
21 speaking, your first name, last name, and your
22 organizational affiliation if you have one. It will also
23 be great to share your hometown, if you don't mind, just
24 so we have a sense of where you're coming in from today
25 here on the Zoom screen. And if your name has an unusual

1 spelling, that's also helpful for our transcriptionist.
2 So a couple of things to keep in mind.

3 Things that aren't on here but I think are really
4 helpful for those that are calling in -- so you can join
5 today just by phone as well. And one of the things that's
6 useful to have by phone is the ability to raise your hand
7 digitally so that I can see you and bring your voice into
8 the conversation, and you can do that by hitting star 9.
9 That's a toggle feature on your phone, so star 9 will give
10 you a virtual hand raise. And then a reminder that star 6
11 is your toggle for mute and unmute. And we'll help with
12 that too as we look to the different participant names
13 here on the screen.

14 So just to build off of some of the higher level
15 objectives for this meeting that Leanne shared with us at
16 the top of the hour here, this is really a chance for
17 engagement, for conversation, for objectors and interested
18 persons to discuss these topics with the reviewing
19 officer, which is Leanne in this case, and to have an
20 engaging conversation so that you can really understand
21 one another. That gives you the chance to validate or
22 clarify your concerns with her and make sure that everyone
23 has a shared sense of really what's happening out on the
24 landscape and what the potential effects or impacts of the
25 decision might be.

1 It's a nice way too to engage with other attendees, so
2 other folks that have similar interests, and really
3 discuss potential resolutions to some of the objections
4 and to think about where is there opportunity to think
5 about some of the overriding or collective concerns that
6 you share, and hopefully we'll leave today with just a
7 better of understanding of where everyone is coming at the
8 issues as well as what's next. So we'll end today, as we
9 have the last couple of days, with just a review of the
10 day, reflection on some of the key issues that came
11 forward, and an opportunity to clarify some of the next
12 steps.

13 And just a quick overview of today's agenda as we walk
14 through the topics for today. So we've got just a little
15 bit more time here in this opening session for this
16 welcome, sharing the overall objectives for the meeting
17 and our agenda. It's a chance as well to offer all of
18 you, when we conclude here in a second, to test your audio
19 and visual. And then we'll jump in at 10 o'clock with the
20 conversation on the conservation watershed network issues
21 and downstream water uses. We'll turn, at 11 o'clock, to
22 timber, sustained yield, and reforestation. Today's lunch
23 break will be at noon. We'll come back at 1:30 to discuss
24 range issues, and that will be our final topic. And we'll
25 conclude with a summary of the day around 2:30.

1 So we will close here for a second between now and
2 10 o'clock, and that will give us a chance to check in
3 with any of you that would like to test your audio or
4 visual equipment and make sure we're all set.

5 And I also wanted to have this slide available to let
6 you know that today we've got links to the different
7 briefing papers in advance of each session. This was a
8 request we had yesterday, and I thought it was a good one.
9 So we will list these briefing papers and provide the
10 links in advance or in the half hour before each of these
11 sessions today. Right now, I'm showing the briefing paper
12 links for the conservation watershed network and
13 downstream water uses as well as the paper on timber,
14 sustained yield, and reforestation. I'm going to close
15 this for now but will post it again here as we transition
16 from this opening session into our first break.

17 I just want to hit the pause button there and turn to
18 Leanne to see if there's anything that I missed or that
19 you'd like to share, and check in with Timory as well.

20 Leanne.

21 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Shawn. And you may have
22 said it and I may have missed it, but the reason that
23 we're taking some of these breaks, like now until 10:00,
24 is because we fully recognize some folks aren't going to
25 join us until 10:00 if they're interested in that topic.

1 So we're going to be honoring the start times and the end
2 times. If we get done earlier than, say, the time
3 allotted, that's okay. We'll just take a break until the
4 next one starts up. And that's to honor people's
5 schedules if they're coming and going during the day. And
6 we've had that over the last couple days, where we've got
7 some folks that are not participating all day but they
8 have certain topics, so we want to make sure we honor
9 that, and we'll go from there on that part of it.

10 We went over on a few of them yesterday. Today as the
11 schedule is lined up, we don't have that opportunity on a
12 couple of them because we don't have some breaks. But
13 Shawn, I guess one of the things I was thinking of, if
14 folks have a time commitment and they've got their hand
15 up, we just need to make sure, and I'll say that again, if
16 folks have to go, that we want to hear their voices before
17 they have to log off, we'll make sure we honor that. We
18 did that with a couple folks yesterday, and it seemed to
19 work just fine.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thanks, Leanne. You did a
21 nice job capturing all of the key issues around the agenda
22 and the time frames and all of that. And I'll do my best
23 too to look for those opportunities to keep us on track
24 and to check in with people with plenty of time before the
25 end of the hour there to make sure, if anyone needs to

1 leave, we hear their voice and engage them in the
2 conversation.

3 MS. MARTEN: And that's all I have.

4 Timory, is there anything else we missed from your
5 perspective?

6 MR. JOHNSON: Timory, you're on mute.

7 MS. PEEL: I said nope, I think you guys have got
8 it nailed here on this third day. So I'm available in the
9 next 30 minutes for anybody that wants to test audio or
10 video or needs some technical troubleshooting.

11 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Very good.

12 Any questions from the participants about any of these
13 opening remarks? Anything not clear or anyone want to
14 test their audio or visual? If so, you can either raise
15 your hand or just take yourself off mute.

16 All right. Very good. Well, I will go ahead and
17 leave the Zoom meeting space open, and so if people want
18 to just hang on, you can mute your audio and visual and
19 address whatever other issues or business you'd like to.

20 I do see a hand raised, and so I'll take that next.

21 For those that are going to take a quick break, we'll
22 see you at 10 o'clock for the conservation watershed
23 network and downstream water uses conversation, and we'll
24 see you there. And in between, we'll connect with people
25 that have questions or want to connect with us on any of

1 this kind of table-setting type work.

2 (Off the record briefly.)

3 MR. JOHNSON: Hello and welcome back. My name is
4 Shawn Johnson, with the University of Montana, and I'm
5 helping to facilitate today's conversation. I saw many of
6 you at the 9 o'clock hour for the start of today where we
7 went over some basics. But in case you're just joining
8 us, I want to share a warm welcome and also introduce you
9 to some of the features of today's call.

10 So across the bottom, I want to just alert you to a
11 couple of buttons. You'll see on the bottom left a Mute
12 button that will provide a toggle for your audio, so mute
13 or unmute for your audio. Next to that, the same feature
14 for your video.

15 The Participants tab is an important one. If you
16 click on that, that provides you the opportunity to raise
17 or lower your hand. And so if you click the Participants
18 tab or button at the bottom, it will open a new window
19 that lists all the participants. Below people's names at
20 the bottom, there will be a Raise Hand opportunity. And
21 so for the objectors and the persons to join us in today's
22 conversation, that's a nice feature to help me track who
23 would like to engage in conversation with the regional
24 forester.

25 The Chat function is also important. And if you click

1 on the Chat function now, that will open a new window at
2 the bottom. I'm just going to throw in some information
3 there so you can see how that works.

4 An invitation to go ahead and rename yourself, if you
5 haven't already. So you can rename yourself by clicking
6 on the box on your Zoom screen, your Zoom window. If you
7 click on the three dots in the upper right-hand corner,
8 that will give you a chance to rename yourself. And I
9 would invite you to rename yourself with your first name,
10 last name, and organizational affiliation. If you're part
11 of an organization who has multiple objectors on one of
12 the issues today, we'd like to ask you to also list
13 yourself as lead objector in that same window. That would
14 be helpful.

15 For media inquiries, please be in contact with Chiara.
16 Her information is in the chat box. For technical
17 assistance or questions that you might have about the
18 planning process, Cody and Timory are on standby, and
19 their information is also in the chat box. And finally,
20 we've provided a link there to closed captioning, which
21 we're providing today for those that need that feature.

22 In addition to the closed captioning, we're lucky to
23 have a court reporter providing a transcript for today.
24 So just a reminder to everyone to speak slowly and clearly
25 so that Cheryl can capture our conversation and have that

1 as part of the record.

2 I'll be turning it over shortly here to Leanne Marten,
3 the regional forester, to guide us through the first
4 conversation today, which is going to be on conservation
5 watershed network issues and downstream water uses. If
6 you are an objector or an interested party -- or
7 interested person on that conversation, I'd invite you now
8 to go ahead and turn on your videocamera so we can see who
9 wants to be a part of that conversation. And we'll have
10 you introduce yourselves here in a second.

11 As we get started, just a reminder that the focus of
12 today really is on building some shared understanding and
13 seeking clarity on the objections that you've raised. So
14 we just invite everyone to listen carefully to one
15 another, to show respect to one another, to recognize that
16 there will be some questions today that are seeking
17 clarity, and so those may seem probing at times, but
18 they're really trying to build some shared understanding.
19 We're also looking to, where possible, look towards some
20 ideas for resolving some of your objections. So we invite
21 all of you to be a part of those conversations as we move
22 forward.

23 With that, I think I'm ready to turn it over to
24 Leanne. I see just a couple more people joining us just
25 now, so we'll give them a minute to jump in. Again, if

1 you haven't had a chance to turn your video on for this
2 part of the conversation, I'd invite you to do that.

3 And before I turn it over to Leanne, I would like to
4 go ahead and have you all introduce yourselves. That will
5 just give me a chance to make sure your audio and visual
6 is working for this conversation. So I'll start with Al.

7 Al, do you want to say hi?

8 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Good morning, everyone.
9 Thanks for having another session. I look forward to it.
10 I'm more just interested in this topic, but I'm going to
11 stay on.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Al.

13 Tom Partin. Tom, you're on mute.

14 MR. PARTIN: Thank you for reminding me.

15 Tom Partin with the American Forest Resource Council.
16 We represent the forest products industry in five western
17 states and have a number of forest products industry
18 members in Montana, and we follow closely all the national
19 forests in Region 1, and hence that's why our interest in
20 the Helena-Lewis and Clark plan revision. Thank you.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Very good. Thanks, Tom.

22 Pete, do you want to say good morning?

23 MR. NELSON: Yes, sir. Greetings. Pete Nelson,
24 director of the federal lands program for Defenders of
25 wildlife. I also direct our forest policy and planning

1 program nationwide. I'm in Bozeman, Montana.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Good morning, Pete.

3 Let's go to Erling, John, Lee, and Al. Do you guys
4 want to introduce yourselves? We can't hear you; you're
5 on mute.

6 MR. CHASE: This is John Chase. I'm with the
7 Cascade Conservation District, Sun River Watershed Group,
8 and I'm out of Great Falls.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, John.

10 MR. SIGNALNESS: Lee Signalness, Fort Shaw
11 Irrigation District, Fort Shaw, Montana.

12 MR. JUEL: Hi. This is Erling Juel. I'm with
13 Greenfields Irrigation District. I also serve on the
14 Sun River Watershed Group.

15 MR. ROLLO: This is Al Rollo out of Great Falls,
16 and I'm an interested party.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, guys. Quite the
18 setup you've got there with that screen. I like it.

19 Bryan, do you want to say good morning?

20 MR. LORENZO: Yeah, good morning. Bryan Lorenzo,
21 Montana Logging Association, serving our membership in
22 southwest Montana.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Bryan.

24 Are there any other objectors or interested parties
25 this morning that want to join? Did I miss anyone?

1 Andy Johnson, are you there?

2 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Yes. Can you hear me all
3 right?

4 MR. JOHNSON: I can.

5 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: You can't see me, can you?

6 MR. JOHNSON: Cannot see you.

7 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: On my screen, it says "Start
8 Video" and it's got a red line through it. And so when I
9 click on that, it says "Camera has been occupied by other
10 apps, please release privilege." I have no idea what
11 they're talking about.

12 MR. JOHNSON: I can't help you either, but we're
13 glad to have your voice.

14 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Fair enough.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Do you want to introduce yourself?

16 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Yeah. Andy Johnson. I'm an
17 independent miner. My objection's on what they've written
18 about riparian management zones.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

20 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: You bet.

21 MR. JOHNSON: And we'll be checking the
22 Participants box there, Andy, to make sure we get your
23 question.

24 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: I'm sorry. What?

25 MR. JOHNSON: I'll be checking the -- on screen

1 here, I can see when you're off mute, and we'll make sure
2 we get your questions included in the conversation.

3 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Thanks so much.

4 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Well, welcome everyone.
5 Leanne, I'll turn it over to you.

6 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Shawn.

7 Good morning, everyone. And yeah, I was looking at
8 the setup there in the room with Erling and John and Lee
9 and others. It's quite the setup, so it's great that you
10 could join us this morning as well.

11 I am going to try and summarize what I understand of
12 the issues we're talking about this morning, and there's
13 really three distinct parts. And I'm going to be working
14 off of the briefing paper that you all have access to and
15 that I think, Shawn, you posted a link to earlier today,
16 or it may still be in the chat box, I believe.

17 So there's the conservation watershed network, bull
18 trout, and downstream water uses. And I fully understand
19 that they're all linked and they do overlap, but just
20 trying to parse out as we move through the dialogue, I'm
21 going to key into those three distinct parts of the issue,
22 a very broad overview of what I understand to date. And
23 there's some proposed remedies that I do have some
24 questions about that I could use some help with from that
25 standpoint.

1 So with the conservation watershed network part of it,
2 and some of the objections that came up around that, there
3 is a distinct request for additional clarity around a
4 selection of the networks in accordance with the planning
5 rule and the management within those conservation
6 watersheds. So we'll dig into that a little bit in a
7 minute here, but that's the real broad brush. There's
8 concerns around that.

9 There's concerns around bull trout and how we analyze
10 bull trout, the analysis in the EIS for bull trout, and
11 really how it ties into the Inland Native Fish Strategy
12 standards; a feeling of there's some weakening of the
13 aquatic resources with the way that we're moving forward
14 with the proposed revised plan; and a need for some
15 components missing from the forest plan to adequately
16 address bull trout and to protect bull trout. And again,
17 I've got a couple questions on that one.

18 And then there is downstream water uses, regarding the
19 irrigation and very specific comments regarding downstream
20 water uses and its tie to fire, wildfire suppression
21 particularly, and fire management from that perspective.

22 So those are the three groups. I know there's a lot
23 of other nuances and a lot of other details that were
24 written into your objections. And I think I stated
25 earlier, but I'll err on the side of repeating myself,

1 just because it may not come up in dialogue today doesn't
2 mean that the rest of what was written in your objection
3 letters is not being taken seriously or that it's not
4 important. We definitely are taking a look at everything
5 that was sent in.

6 So as we move forward with the dialogue today and my
7 questions, it's in areas that I need some help on some
8 clarity, need some more information perhaps to understand
9 the context in which it was written. But also, I ask that
10 you not just repeat what's in your written objection,
11 because I do have those and have read them, and we've been
12 looking at those in depth. It's really to get that
13 dialogue going between myself, all of you, and amongst all
14 of you on the issue and the proposed remedies, really
15 looking at what you're looking for to help address the
16 concerns that you saw with the revised forest plan as it's
17 being proposed and as written from that.

18 So any questions at this point before I jump into the
19 proposed remedies and questions I have? I'll just pause.

20 Did I tell you it's kind of funny seeing myself on a
21 screen through a screen? It's amazing technology.

22 Okay. Great. Let me jump into remedies and a couple
23 questions. And again, I know this will overlap some, but
24 I'll just start at an area. So with the conservation
25 watershed networks, some of the comments that I read and I

1 heard about was the need for, the request for additional
2 clarity around the selection and the management within
3 those conservation networks. And I'm just wondering if
4 someone can give me some help on what you feel is missing
5 from what was written on the rationale.

6 I'll just throw this out as a starting point: Is it
7 that you couldn't track the rationale of why we did
8 include some and not others? Is it a disagreement on what
9 the rationale led us to and what Forest Supervisor Avey is
10 proposing in his decision? Is it just you just couldn't
11 find information? I just couldn't quite tease out what
12 specifically -- if there's an example to help me
13 understand what folks felt was missing when they asked for
14 additional clarity, on what parts or in general.

15 So maybe someone can help me with that or help me
16 understand a little bit more so I can try and understand
17 the context of the comments and the objections around
18 those.

19 And Shawn, I'm going to have to have you help me with
20 hands again.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. No, happy to.

22 Is anyone able to jump in and kind of provide some
23 clarity for Leanne on that question?

24 Folks there in Great Falls, do you want to jump in?
25 Andy, did you want to jump in?

1 I can't hear the people in Great Falls if you guys are
2 trying to join -- or in Fairfield, wherever you are.

3 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Can you hear me now?

4 MR. JOHNSON: Now I can hear Andy.

5 Andy, go ahead.

6 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: What I was going to say was I
7 didn't totally understand the question. But my objection
8 was strictly with the riparian areas, so I'm not sure
9 that's what Leanne wanted to talk about at this time.

10 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Andy. I think she was
11 looking more about these conservation watershed networks
12 and trying to see where some of the concerns around those
13 came from.

14 MR. ROLLO: And for the group in Fairfield, I
15 think that's not the specifics that we were wanting to
16 comment on either.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thanks, guys.

18 MS. MARTEN: Go ahead, Pete.

19 MR. NELSON: I was going to say we made a brief
20 remark on this issue in our objection, Leanne, and I would
21 have to go back and look at our other materials to really
22 expand on it. But in our objection, we made the point
23 that we were not -- and I think this gets to your
24 question, but I'm afraid I'm not shedding more light on
25 it, is that we were not able to track the logic associated

1 with the selection process for some watersheds. It's not
2 just selection, though, it's also the relationship between
3 the selection and the provision of meta population
4 connectivity associated with the network that's
5 established.

6 So I'll leave it at that for now, but I will promise
7 also to get you more thinking on that. I'm having to
8 manage a lot of various aspects of this objection. But I
9 think that may perhaps be one thing that you're referring
10 to. But to answer your question is just seeking more
11 logic in the record on the EIS so the reader can really
12 follow that, the presentation of that information and the
13 justification for the selection process and the resulting
14 connectivity benefits that will result from that. So I do
15 think as you look at the record of decision, that could be
16 an area of emphasis to add more value so the reader can
17 track that logic. Thanks.

18 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Thanks, Pete. I
19 appreciate it. And yeah, you know, we're all human, so
20 when we write something ourselves, to us it's perfectly
21 clear, you know. And I know that's obviously not the case
22 when others read our own writing and vice versa. So
23 that's where I was just trying to tease out, if there was
24 something really specific folks were looking for.

25 So that's great, and that's helpful, Pete. And I

1 totally understand there's a lot to all of this on that
2 part of it.

3 so let me change gears a little bit here. Shawn, I'm
4 going to do a little different twist on some of this.

5 Erling and John and Lee and I think it was Alan, I
6 believe you're in Great Falls together. How about if I
7 just jump in and have you guys help me understand what you
8 really want to make sure I'm aware of and the context,
9 versus going section by section? And then we'll go from
10 there with the rest of the group here. Because I don't
11 want to miss out --

12 And then, Andy, we'll get to you as well here, and
13 others.

14 But how about if we start with the group and make sure
15 I get the voices and hear what you want to make sure I'm
16 aware of? And then I can ask questions and we can get a
17 dialogue going that way. I think that may be easier here
18 this morning.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Leanne. And they're in
20 Fairfield. I gave you the impression they were in
21 Great Falls, but they're in Fairfield.

22 And just for that group and for Andy, I put you both
23 on mute after that last conversation, so you'll need to
24 unmute yourself when you get ready to talk here.

25 so the folks there in Fairfield, if you want to share

1 your objection with Leanne, now is a great time to do
2 that.

3 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. And thank you.

4 MR. CHASE: This is John Chase from Cascade
5 Conservation District. Benefits provided by the forest
6 are stressed in a number of instances in the plan. It's
7 entirely appropriate. However, one of the most
8 significant beneficial uses is almost entirely neglected,
9 and that is downstream use of water for irrigated
10 agriculture. The extreme importance of this water use to
11 the regional economy from runoff from the forest is not
12 recognized in the plan, and it's extremely important to
13 us.

14 water is one of the most two principle products of the
15 forest, as stated in the Organic Act of 1897 and
16 reiterated in the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of
17 1960. so that water should be viewed as a major benefit
18 supplied by the forest. And management issues can affect
19 the timing and the amount of runoff supplied for
20 downstream use.

21 MS. MARTEN: So John, real quick, just a clarity
22 question on my part. So you're seeing it missing, but not
23 only that it's just, my paraphrasing, mentioned that it's
24 important, but also just what are the benefits of that to
25 the economics and the American public with the

1 agricultural industry, use of the water for irrigation for
2 agriculture. You know, tying that together is what I hear
3 you saying that you do not see disclosed in the plan. And
4 if it's there in the record someplace, it is not coming
5 out that that was taken into account by Forest Supervisor
6 Avey in his draft decision.

7 Am I hearing that correctly, paraphrasing on my part?

8 MR. CHASE: That's correct. There is very slight
9 mention of it, but it's so extremely important to at least
10 three counties in Montana, that economic value of the
11 water coming off the forest, that I think it needs to be
12 addressed.

13 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. SIGNALNESS: Lee Signalness, Fort Shaw
15 Irrigation District. The plan, as John had mentioned, for
16 downstream water users and so on, there is five irrigation
17 districts plus several private water rights that are held
18 on the Sun River. Agriculture is equally as important as
19 municipal use and probably economically more important
20 than municipal use and should be treated at least fairly
21 and equally to the municipality use.

22 As you address the climate change, and it all comes
23 down into forest management, the macro aspect of it,
24 climate change we all see is happening, but forest
25 management becomes a micro part of it. And in the Helena

1 National Forest, the let-it-burn policy or the
2 uncontrolled burns of large areas is affecting not only
3 the timing of the runoff but also the quantity and the
4 sediment being washed into our rivers and reservoirs. And
5 in mitigation of the river channel, there's been
6 tremendous changes to the Sun River channel, and that is
7 affecting several areas economically, and especially for
8 us as an irrigation district, as it is impacting our
9 headworks.

10 The amount of water that is coming off is leaving our
11 forests a lot sooner and quicker, and I would have to
12 state that I believe that that is causing the additional
13 flooding of the Sun River. And while we have used or
14 Greenfields has utilized their reservoirs to try to
15 mitigate some of the flooding of the Sun River, all that
16 water coming at once, it has impacted several communities
17 along the river. So I guess that is a lot of our concerns
18 at this time.

19 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Lee. I do have a clarifying
20 question or a follow-up for you. I'm just curious -- I
21 hear a couple things, the importance of the water rights,
22 the irrigation, agriculture, as well as clarity or how did
23 we take into account fire on the landscape and the impacts
24 of that to our watersheds and all the various uses.

25 I'm curious from the standpoint of -- and you're fully

1 aware if you guys live there. You know, the Helena-Lewis
2 and Clark is a lot of, I'll just say geographical islands
3 that are broken up with intermittent ownership. Is there
4 something you see missing from the standpoint of clarity
5 on just the intermixed ownership, you know, because water
6 doesn't stop at a jurisdictional boundary, or -- you know,
7 just anything there? I mean, is it connecting those dots
8 between the National Forest System as well as on private
9 land as it goes downstream, or just kind of the whole big
10 picture you feel is missing? If that makes sense.

11 MR. SIGNALNESS: well, I think the plan omits
12 the -- well, whether we're talking private or are we
13 talking the overall.

14 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

15 MR. SIGNALNESS: It appears to give a little lip
16 service but surely lacks the importance of the private
17 uses downstream. I realize that there is a mixed
18 ownership of some of the lands within the forest boundary.
19 But the biggest impact is to the private users downstream.

20 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That helps clarify. Thank
21 you. I wasn't sure if you were keying into different
22 ownerships, but it's the big picture and how they're
23 connected that you see missing and are not able to follow
24 the rationale or connecting the dots.

25 MR. SIGNALNESS: Thank you.

1 MS. MARTEN: Thank you. Very helpful.

2 MR. JUEL: Hi. This is Erling Juel. I'm manager
3 of the Greenfields Irrigation District. I also serve on
4 the Sun River Watershed Group. I guess I just reiterate
5 what John said. It's important that the off-boundaries
6 water users be recognized as important, because, as you
7 mentioned, whether it's irrigation water, private water
8 rights, or whatever, they all originate -- you know, the
9 watershed originates in the forest's boundaries. The
10 north and south fork of the Sun River is primarily our
11 concern. That's where the water comes from, it originates
12 there, and then it leaves the Forest Service and then it's
13 used beyond that. So it's critical that those uses be
14 recognized in the plan.

15 I feel like, you know, municipal water gets a voice,
16 obviously, because there's a connection to its importance,
17 but we don't have that voice. And maybe our input would
18 have a little more weight if we were recognized as -- you
19 know, that the forest management has a direct impact on
20 our resource, because that's where it comes from.

21 And, of course, the guys mentioned about basically our
22 primary concern is managing the canopy, the management of
23 the forest, protecting the canopy. And, you know, I'm not
24 a forester, but we need to find -- And this is where we
25 feel like the plan falls a little short, and my objection

1 is that the plan is not aggressive enough in the fuel
2 reduction such that these catastrophic fires are allowed
3 to burn and get out of control.

4 so I would like to see more emphasis on mechanical
5 thinning, selective burn, whatever, to keep the fuel load
6 down so that we preserve a healthy canopy for all the
7 reasons we stated above.

8 MS. MARTEN: So really looking at the cumulative
9 impact of the multiple use, multiple management of the
10 forest, the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, and
11 how that, be it on National Forest System lands, private
12 lands, other state lands, or what have you, how they're
13 all very much interconnected; and really recognizing that
14 and looking at that bigger cross-jurisdictional picture
15 and at least acknowledging, disclosing, and putting down
16 what is the thought process of Forest Supervisor Avey as
17 he's looking through the components in the plan and how
18 that ties into water rights, for instance, or the fuels
19 management, how that's tied into water, be it on National
20 Forest System lands or it crosses jurisdictional
21 boundaries. There's gaps there from what you're seeing
22 that you can't -- that need filled in.

23 My paraphrasing again, so my apologies, gentlemen.
24 But I just want to make sure I'm understanding the gist of
25 what you're getting at.

1 MR. JUEL: Yes. You're getting to the crux of
2 it, yes.

3 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Excellent.

4 So other thoughts or other things? That helps clarify
5 tremendously some of what we were reading and puts it in
6 context much better for me. So I really appreciate that
7 from that standpoint.

8 But before I switch to some of your other colleagues
9 here and peers on the meeting, I just want to make sure if
10 there is anything else just with the folks there in
11 Fairfield. Not that you can't pop in again.

12 MR. JUEL: That should work for us. Thank you
13 very much.

14 MS. MARTEN: You betcha. Thank you very much.
15 Very helpful.

16 Shawn, I'm going to turn it back over to you, because
17 I'm not sure with the hands and others. I think Andy had
18 something, but I wasn't sure other folks, so...

19 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. I haven't seen any other
20 hands, and I know Andy did want to talk about his interest
21 in the riparian areas.

22 So Andy, if you are there, do you want to bring those
23 concerns forward?

24 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Yeah. Can you hear me all
25 right?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Loud and clear.

2 MS. MARTEN: I can hear you, Andy, loud and
3 clear.

4 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: Okay. Well, thanks so much
5 for letting me participate in the meetings. And what it
6 was, because of my troubles trying to get a reasonable
7 permit up on Ready Cash Gulch, which I understand you're
8 familiar with, I started following this whole process.
9 And it seems like I've been kind of on the one side of the
10 argument and whoever is writing for the Forest Service has
11 been on the other side of the argument.

12 But what it came down to was the draft EIS, the draft
13 plan. In the draft plan under riparian areas, it said
14 they did not want to allow placer mining. And so I
15 pointed out to them that placer mining is still a big part
16 of the Mining Law, so they cannot do that. So what they
17 came back with was they changed placer mining to gravel
18 mining. But really, up in those headwaters, no one is
19 going to go up there to do gravel mining.

20 So to me it was a euphemism, meaning, well, we can't
21 allow you to placer mine up there, because that can be
22 considered gravel mining. So what I've asked them to do
23 is remove gravel mining out of that statement. And that's
24 where we're at with that.

25 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

1 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: And another thing I wanted to
2 point out, and I put it in here, I put it in some of my
3 documents, if Ready Cash Gulch had been over on the
4 Custer Gallatin National Forest, I don't think I would
5 have had nearly this trouble because of the way they wrote
6 their riparian area situation, where, well, if it can't be
7 avoided, then we've got to minimize and mitigate. And I
8 can understand that. I can deal with that. But because
9 I'm on Helena National Forest, they've taken a different
10 view of it. They don't really like mining on that side.
11 And so I've had this head-butting situation going on for
12 seven years.

13 My point is I believe throughout the region, all the
14 rules and all the regulations should be the same from one
15 forest, from one district to the next, and I would
16 encourage that. And that goes also with definitions,
17 because definitions become important when we start arguing
18 about what does this mean, what does that mean. And so I
19 took a review of all the plans in Region 1, and I was
20 surprised at the differences in the definitions. So
21 that's just kind of a heads-up comment.

22 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Very helpful.

23 MR. ANDY JOHNSON: So that's where we're at.

24 MS. MARTEN: No, I appreciate that. Thank you
25 Andy. That helps me get an understanding of what you're

1 seeing and the differences you're seeing between even
2 national forests within the same region and the confusion
3 there. So very helpful on that part of it.

4 I do have a question and follow-up, and I don't know
5 if anybody on the call here was the one that brought this
6 up, because, you know, not everybody was able to
7 participate. But there was a request around bull trout
8 and asking for additional analysis. And again, I'm kind
9 of curious on what specifically folks feel was missing.

10 I understand there's a whole spectrum of difference of
11 opinions on science and analysis and outcomes from that,
12 which is not unusual. It's a lot of different species and
13 parts of natural resource management. But specifically,
14 you know, we were requested to supplement the analysis or
15 add to it. And I'm not quite sure what gap folks were
16 referring to, if there was something very specific they
17 feel like we just did not take into account or if it
18 really comes down to the interpretations of the science
19 and there's differences there, or something in between
20 that.

21 Again, I'm not sure if the person who keyed into bull
22 trout is on the call here, but I wanted to throw that out,
23 because that was a potential remedy that was thrown out.
24 I'm just not clear on exactly what that was referring to.
25 And if they're not on, that's okay too.

1 Anybody have a comment on that?

2 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Leanne. Yeah, let's see if
3 anyone has a response to that. And then Tom wanted to
4 jump in next with one of his questions.

5 MS. MARTEN: Oh, sure. I'm sorry. I didn't mean
6 to jump up --

7 MR. JOHNSON: No, no. Just giving you a sense of
8 where we are on the conversation.

9 So does anyone want to respond to the question on bull
10 trout and the potential remedy that was put forward?

11 Not seeing anyone, Leanne.

12 MS. MARTEN: That's fair.

13 Oh. Go ahead, Pete, if you had something.

14 MR. NELSON: Leanne, I don't know exactly what
15 you're referring to, if there was a distinct request for
16 supplemental analysis.

17 MS. MARTEN: There was, but it wasn't specific.
18 It was a general statement and a general request, and
19 that's what I'm struggling with, Pete, is that's pretty
20 broad.

21 MR. NELSON: It touches on some of our concerns,
22 so I'll just mention those here briefly.

23 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

24 MR. NELSON: You know, I think that we are
25 seeing -- And I think we'll probably talk about INFISH and

1 maybe the bigger picture here in a moment, but, you know,
2 we're generally seeing a relaxation of the INFISH
3 framework for aquatic conservation management, including
4 bull trout. You know, I think we felt like we've made our
5 case pretty clear in terms of pointing out how the
6 framework is changing from INFISH to the revised plan.

7 And regarding analysis, you know, I think our point is
8 that the analysis provided has not demonstrated that we're
9 actually getting an improvement in aquatic conservation
10 under this framework. It's a much different framework, as
11 you all know, as we all know, and it has a different
12 approach associated with it than INFISH. And therefore,
13 we think that the analysis needs to really leave the
14 reader with a clear impression and finding that you're
15 going to result in improved aquatic conditions for at-risk
16 species.

17 So to the degree that that might be part of what
18 you're talking about, yes. But I do not believe that
19 Defenders called distinctly for a supplemental NEPA.

20 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

21 MR. NELSON: There's a related issue, which is
22 how this analysis occurs at the project level. And also
23 for bull trout, I think there's a reference to other
24 conservation planning documents that will be used to guide
25 decisionmaking, and I think there's an issue there with

1 how you would incorporate that information into this
2 planning process and thus not have to kind of address
3 changes in those plans that happen while this plan is
4 underway.

5 So, I don't know, there's really interesting issues
6 about supplementing analysis, I guess. But happy to talk
7 more if you have more directed questions on that.

8 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. No, that's helpful, Pete.
9 And I can see -- And I know you and I have had other
10 conversations with the INFISH and where we're at and, you
11 know, hydro monitoring and just all the stuff through the
12 years and how that connects or doesn't connect and how
13 we're taking those things into account and what we do or
14 do not have, depending on the view, to substantiate
15 changes that we may be doing from INFISH.

16 As you're aware, INFISH was interim, but interim has
17 gotten extended since the '90s on that, and we all know
18 there's a variety of reasons why that happened. And that
19 could be where -- I think you're right. I think that's
20 where some of it, whether or not that's supplement or not,
21 it's just the difference and the thought process on
22 connecting those dots and having clear rationale and, what
23 I hear you saying, if there's going to be a deviation, how
24 are we supporting or substantiating that with data that
25 shows there's a reason to deviate from INFISH and the

1 framework there on that.

2 So that does help. Thank you. It's very complex,
3 trying to -- you know, all the different analyses and all
4 the different, as you said, the different frameworks and
5 strategies and conservation strategies being worked on and
6 everything on that.

7 MR. NELSON: Absolutely. And I don't know if we
8 want to have this conversation now, but I think when we go
9 through a major transition like this from INFISH to a new
10 paradigm, it's essential that the Agency provide a real
11 clear logic here.

12 It reminds me, Leanne, of our conversation on Tuesday
13 where, you know, the riparian management objectives from
14 INFISH are being converted into monitoring aspects so that
15 you can look at reference watershed conditions versus
16 managed watershed conditions. You know, but clearly using
17 a monitoring approach versus more of a desired condition
18 or plan component driven approach is a big paradigm shift.

19 Now, I do acknowledge that there are scientific issues
20 here associated with the range of conditions that are
21 present in the variety of watersheds in the forest, and we
22 do acknowledge that complexity. But we also think it is
23 feasible to develop specific desired conditions for
24 categories of watersheds to allow a bit more
25 accountability for the process.

1 Because, getting back to our conversation on Tuesday
2 thematically, you know, a lot of our concern was we're
3 moving from a forest planning process that puts the
4 planning aspects in the plan to a process that says we are
5 going to make those determinations of desired conditions
6 for riparian areas later using information generated from
7 monitoring and reference watershed conditions, but the
8 reader doesn't really have an understanding of what those
9 reference conditions are or what those desired conditions
10 are right now.

11 And so I acknowledge that tension. I think what we're
12 looking for is a better balancing between accountability
13 and clarity in the plan, and then what happens
14 subsequently when we do get into project level application
15 of those desired conditions. So that's that argument in a
16 nutshell.

17 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. No, that helps, Pete. And I
18 know in the Defenders' objection, there's specific
19 examples or remedies offered on how to do some of that, on
20 what you just summarized for us to get into more detail.

21 MR. NELSON: Yeah. Yeah, we have some thoughts
22 on that.

23 MS. MARTEN: Excellent. Excellent. Thank you.
24 Very helpful.

25 Tom I think was next in the queue here, Shawn?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Tom wanted to bring forward
2 a couple of thoughts here.

3 So Tom, do you want to jump in?

4 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. Thank you very much.
5 Tom Partin with American Forest Resource Council. And
6 really, just kind of continue the discussion that you've
7 had with Pete here on the transition from management in
8 RMZs out of the PACFISH/INFISH into our new forest plan.
9 And the point we made in our objection letter and what
10 we'd like to talk about a little bit is the importance of
11 doing some management in these RMZs. And what we saw in
12 the plan is just a lack of acres where commercial work and
13 really management could be accomplished.

14 And why the RMZs, from our perspective, are really
15 important, number one, it's some of the better timber
16 growing sites. Number two, oftentimes, that's where you
17 have some of the heavier stands of timber, some of the
18 heavier wood components, and, actually, some of the
19 heavier fire risks that we have seen. And when we have a
20 fire, some of the worst damage has been done in the
21 riparian areas, the specific areas we're trying to
22 protect.

23 And when you get a wildfire going in these heavy
24 hills, the area looks absolutely nuked. And we've had
25 several examples of that on fires in recent history. Once

1 you have that condition, then you have a tremendous amount
2 of erosion in those areas, and we really lose a lot of the
3 resources and components of the riparian areas that we're
4 really trying to save.

5 And, you know, we're not talking about going in and
6 making wholesale changes, but I think just an
7 acknowledgement that there has to be some management in
8 these areas or fuels reductions or improvements in the
9 RMZs, like adding big wood to it. That's often a job we
10 can do in our operations while in there.

11 And we've also included two or three studies in our
12 input letter, Leanne, that talks about paired watersheds
13 and really the impacts which are minimal, if any, on
14 stream temperatures, on stream sedimentation. And these
15 are kind of the most recent, up-to-the-date studies where
16 it really points out that the benefits of doing some
17 management in these areas really aren't offset by anything
18 on the negative side of it.

19 So I think it's new information that we need to look
20 at. I think we're all interested in preserving and
21 enhancing our riparian areas, making sure that we have
22 more water, more clean water coming from our national
23 forests. But again, the science is evolving. And each
24 one of us have particular areas we'd like to focus in, but
25 really, ours is looking at how we can get in there and

1 physically treat a few more of the acres, some of the more
2 high-productive acres on your national forest.

3 so that's really all the input I had there.

4 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Tom. I do have just a
5 clarifying question, and I think I did see where Bryan --
6 I want to make sure, you know, to get his voice in the
7 room.

8 You know, when you refer to management, and this could
9 be a loaded question, Tom, so I don't mean it that way,
10 but I'm going to hear myself say it, that isn't always
11 commercial timber harvest. I mean, management can be a
12 whole variety of different ways, and I think I hear you
13 saying that. At the same time, taking into account, when
14 we can, increase the flexibility to do commercial, have
15 the economic benefits as well as the resource and all
16 that, of course, is preferable. But I don't believe
17 you're saying it always has to be just commercial timber
18 harvest, it's management.

19 MR. PARTIN: Right. And I think we need to look
20 at all aspects of it, whether it be commercial or whether
21 it be going in and doing fuel reductions on small material
22 that may not be commercial, or even a prescribed burning.
23 But somehow, keep that fuel loading down in those riparian
24 areas to where it doesn't get built up and we get a fire
25 in there that just completely nukes those areas we're

1 trying to save.

2 So just really wanting to put a focus and maybe a
3 second thought from the Forest on the importance of
4 looking at those riparian areas and what we really need to
5 keep them intact and producing what we want.

6 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Thanks. I just
7 wanted to make sure, because I thought that's what I was
8 hearing you say, but I wanted to clarify I wasn't putting
9 my own thought process into your words.

10 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. And I think those studies we
11 included really point that out too, that there's a variety
12 and a real wide field of options to look at in how to
13 enhance riparian areas.

14 MS. MARTEN: Okay.

15 MR. PARTIN: Thank you.

16 MS. MARTEN: Thank you. Thanks, Tom. I
17 appreciate it.

18 Is it Bryan, Shawn?

19 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Bryan would like to get in
20 on the conversation as well.

21 So Bryan, do you want to jump in?

22 MR. LORENZO: Yeah, you bet. Bryan Lorenzo,
23 Montana Logging Association, and I would just echo Tom's
24 management in those areas.

25 I think if you look at what we do for the state in our

1 BMP SMZs, the results are impeccable. And I think -- you
2 know, I'm seeing some areas on the forests, not
3 particularly the Helena-Lewis and Clark, on the
4 Beaverhead-Deer Lodge, you know, where you might see aspen
5 stands that need treated, both commercially and
6 non-commercially, for a lot of reasons, and there's just a
7 caution to not do that. And I think, you know, if we do
8 that in the right conditions, frozen ground conditions, we
9 can meet all the management objectives and protect that
10 and enhance aspen.

11 So I'd just say I think we need to have a little bit
12 more flexibility and showcase where we have done good work
13 there. And we've done that, and we'll continue to
14 showcase that. But if there's places on the forest that
15 are good examples, I think we need to showcase those.

16 Thank you.

17 MS. MARTEN: So Bryan, just out of curiosity, you
18 know, one of the things in the Helena-Lewis and Clark
19 proposed revised plan, there is, like, inner and outer
20 riparian zones, you know, the 100-foot and the 200-foot,
21 and they have flexibility built in depending where you're
22 at. So when you're thinking about this, are you thinking
23 specifically within, like, the 100-foot riparian zone and
24 having increased flexibility there, because there's quite
25 a bit in the 200, you know, when you get further out, or

1 just in general?

2 I'm just trying to clarify, do you have a difference,
3 like, between those two zones or what your thoughts are
4 there.

5 MR. LORENZO: well, honestly, I'd like to see the
6 flexibility and use the -- The State has a 50-foot rule.
7 And we've shown successfully that we can -- if you have to
8 enter those stands and you do it appropriately. Because
9 we want to limit sediment and we don't want to damage
10 things. But I think there's success in some flexibility.
11 You know, as long as there's not steep slopes or that kind
12 of stuff where you might have sediment issues.

13 But there's ways -- I think the hydrology folks and
14 the folks who are doing the layout, I think there's
15 just -- It's easy to say no, but I think you probably have
16 conflicting ologists that say from a fuels standpoint it
17 needs to be treated, and then you have another ologist who
18 says, yeah, but there's the bigger concerns. It's the
19 head-butting I think and compromise, and I think somewhere
20 in the middle we can make it work.

21 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. That helps. So part
22 of it's the, quote/unquote, distance, but it's just -- The
23 underlying of what I hear you saying is having the
24 flexibility to be able to manage how it needs managed, and
25 it's going to vary from riparian zone to riparian zone

1 depending on a whole host of things, topography, fuel
2 loading, et cetera, on that.

3 MR. LORENZO: And then I think, you know, you
4 could also build in, you know, where are some places that
5 you need to protect those areas? You know, is it for
6 grazing or wildlife reasons maybe that impact it? I think
7 you could remove material out of there, conifer
8 encroachment a lot of times, and then fence those off, and
9 I think you'll see success over five or ten years as long
10 as there's not those impacts.

11 So just a few of my thoughts.

12 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. No, I appreciate it. That
13 helps clarify, again, some of the context and how you're
14 seeing things and the diversity that you're seeing out
15 there. And yeah, natural resource management, no one ever
16 said it was easy and straightforward.

17 MR. LORENZO: No. And, you know, Leanne, the
18 other thing I'd make is, you know, the folks that are
19 maybe apprehensive to do management to that level, you
20 know, we have our BMP audits all the time, and we're
21 taking them and showcasing the work we do both on private,
22 state, and agency grounds, Forest Service or BLM, and I
23 think we showcase that we do a good job out there. And so
24 those folks that are apprehensive, I invite those folks to
25 reach out to me. I'll take them on any job and showcase

1 the work we do.

2 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Bryan. Very
3 helpful. I appreciate it.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Bryan.

5 MS. MARTEN: So Shawn, I know we're starting to
6 run short on time, but just want to make sure I didn't
7 miss anybody that's in the queue and make sure we have
8 voices.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Let's go back to make sure
10 we didn't miss anyone that's calling in. Were there any
11 objectors or interested persons who are just calling in
12 and haven't had a chance to talk with Leanne on this
13 topic?

14 MS. MARTEN: That sounded like a talk show host.

15 MR. JOHNSON: I don't see anyone speaking up, so
16 I don't see anything else.

17 And I just wanted to circle back with Pete to make
18 sure that we got to all your issues too. I know that you
19 brought up some conversations in response to Leanne's
20 question. But was there anything else on this topic that
21 you were interested in visiting about?

22 MR. NELSON: Thank you. No. I mean, I thought
23 our objection was -- well, I thought it was well-reasoned.
24 So Leanne, let me know if you have any specific questions
25 about the points we raised therein.

1 MS. MARTEN: Yes. No, I appreciate that, Pete.
2 I don't have anything at this time, questions about the
3 objection and how it was written and all that. I can
4 track it.

5 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Well, unless you had
6 any other questions, Leanne, I think --

7 MS. MARTEN: No. You guys did a great job
8 answering the questions I had and clarifying some of the
9 points that I just -- I wasn't seeing it in the right
10 context. So thank you, folks. It's always extremely
11 helpful to just hear it verbally sometimes and be able to
12 have me just even tease out one or two questions. It's
13 amazing how that can shift how you're reading something in
14 writing versus how it was actually intended.

15 So very helpful. Really appreciate it, and appreciate
16 you taking time out of your busy day this morning.

17 Shawn, I'll turn it back over to you, because I think
18 we have just a few minutes before we switch topics again,
19 but I'll let you run through those logistics.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, for sure. Thanks, Leanne.

21 And thanks, everyone who joined for this conversation
22 on conservation watershed networks and the downstream
23 water uses. It was a really productive conversation, and
24 we really appreciate your time.

25 We are going to switch to our next topic here at the

1 top of the hour, so at 11 o'clock we'll be moving to
2 timber, sustained yield, and reforestation. So we'll jump
3 back in with more details then, but for now we'll take a
4 quick stretch break and give everyone the chance to stand
5 up. At 11 o'clock, I will come back and welcome people to
6 that next conversation.

7 So thanks again for this conversation at 10:00. A
8 quick break, back at 11:00. See you soon.

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1 TIMBER, SUSTAINED YIELD, AND REFORESTATION

2 Thursday, October 1, 2020, 11:00 a.m. - 11:43 a.m.

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4 A P P E A R A N C E S

5 FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

6 FOREST SERVICE:

7 LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer
8 SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor
9 DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader
10 LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist
11 SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds
12 WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist
13 AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist
14 KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds
15 ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses
16 LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor
17 JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff
18 CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist
19 TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner
20 CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator
21 ERIC ARCHER, Fishery biologist

22 OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

23 AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.
24 ZACH ANGSTEAD, Montana Wilderness Association
25 TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council
 BRYAN LORENZO, Montana Logging Association
 RICK KERR, Choteau
 PETE NELSON, Defenders of wildlife

1 MR. JOHNSON: All right. welcome back. It's
2 11 o'clock. For those that are just joining, my name is
3 Shawn Johnson. I'm with the University of Montana,
4 helping facilitate today's meeting. welcome to our
5 11 o'clock session on timber, sustained yield, and
6 reforestation.

7 It looks like most everyone has stayed on from this
8 morning, with maybe just one or two people joining, so
9 I'll just real briefly go over where we are and some of
10 the features of Zoom here today.

11 The key features are across the bottom of your screen.
12 I'd just ask that everyone stay on mute if they're not
13 speaking. And those buttons are at the bottom left, the
14 Audio and Video Mute buttons. The other ones to pay
15 attention to are the Participants button, so bottom, the
16 fourth over from the left.

17 If you click Participants, that will bring up
18 participants in a separate field. And under the names of
19 the participants, you'll see a Raise Hand feature, and
20 that will help Leanne and I really get a sense of who
21 would like to talk on what topic or in response to a
22 specific question that she asks.

23 And then the other button is the Chat button at the
24 bottom as well, and that will have some information just
25 about today's meeting. And just to update that one more

1 time for people that are just joining us now, I'll go
2 ahead and put some information in the chat box, same as
3 before, with the updated link. We had an update to the
4 link on the closed captioning, so I think this version
5 here reflects that updated link.

6 But just to go over those reminders that are just now
7 in the chat box, go ahead and rename yourself, if you
8 haven't already, with your first name, last name, and the
9 organization. And you do that by clicking on the
10 three dots in the upper right-hand corner of your box.

11 If you're joining us from the press and would like to
12 be in touch with someone, please contact Chiara. She's
13 the public affairs specialist for the Helena-Lewis and
14 Clark, and her contact information is provided in the chat
15 box. And if you have any technical assistance issues or
16 just questions about the planning process, both Cody and
17 Timory are on standby for those.

18 So appreciate all those people helping out today, and
19 please be in touch with them if you have any questions or
20 need any help along the way.

21 I'd like to go ahead and invite those folks who are
22 objectors or interested persons on the issues of timber,
23 sustained yield, and reforestation to go ahead and turn on
24 your videocameras now, and we'll start here with a round
25 of introductions just to get started. And that will give

1 us a chance too to check everyone's audio and visual
2 capabilities and make sure we can both hear and be heard.

3 And as we do so, a reminder that we're really focused
4 today on building some shared understanding. So use this
5 time to really listen to some of the key issues out there.
6 Leanne does a really nice job focusing on some of the key
7 questions that she has. But really, let's build some
8 shared understanding and continue to really demonstrate
9 the ability to hear and be heard during this conversation.

10 I think that's it in terms of logistics, so let's go
11 ahead and jump back in with some introductions. A lot of
12 familiar faces here.

13 So Al, why don't you say hi?

14 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes. Good morning again.
15 Al Christophersen with the Elkhorn Restoration Committee
16 and, unless Joe is on, I'll speak also for the Elkhorn
17 Working Group as an objector.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Al. Appreciate you
19 continuing to carry water for both groups here.

20 Zach, do you want to say hi?

21 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yeah, good morning. Zach Angstead
22 from Montana Wilderness Association. Good morning.
23 Thanks for having us.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Zach.

25 Tom.

1 MR. PARTIN: Good morning. Tom Partin with
2 American Forest Resource Council. Thank you.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Good to see you, Tom.

4 And Bryan.

5 MR. LORENZO: Yeah. Bryan Lorenzo, Montana
6 Logging Association.

7 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks.

8 I want to make sure that there's no one else out
9 there. So if anyone else is an objector or interested
10 person for this issue, let me know and we'll give you an
11 opportunity to say hi here and test your audio and visual
12 capabilities. Is there anyone else on this topic?

13 Anyone on the phone?

14 I do see a hand raised from the phone number ending in
15 1028. If you would like to say hi.

16 MR. KERR: Good morning from Choteau. This is
17 Rick Kerr, an interested person.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Good to have you back with
19 us today, Rick.

20 And Pete Nelson, we're just doing another round of
21 introductions if you want to say hi again.

22 MR. NELSON: Hi. Pete Nelson, Defenders of
23 wildlife.

24 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Well, I'm guessing that
25 Leanne has some questions on this topic, so I don't want

1 to get in the way of those.

2 I'll just turn it over to you, Leanne.

3 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thank you, Shawn. Yeah. I
4 always have questions; right?

5 I have to say, Zach, when you first came on, you had
6 beautiful mountains as your background and I was like,
7 aahh, then you switched it and I'm like, darn it, he's not
8 out in the woods.

9 Let me summarize what I hear on a pretty
10 straightforward and --

11 There you go, Zach. You switched it.

12 -- straightforward and complex issue all at one time.
13 And so, you know, on timber and sustained yield and
14 reforestation, there's a couple of things that were
15 definitely very pointed in the objections. And we had, as
16 you guys can imagine, a spectrum of the revised plan did
17 not designate enough of the land base as suitable for
18 timber management, and then we had on the flip side
19 designated too much as suitable for timber management.
20 So, you know, we had the two extremes, and then a lot of
21 things came in between.

22 There's climate change and whether or not we took into
23 account enough on potential changes to the landscape based
24 on climate change and where that tied into our analysis
25 and Forest Supervisor Avey's draft record of decision.

1 There was very specific comments regarding the
2 Elkhorn wildlife Management Area and the Showdown Ski Area
3 and concerns on how the plan did or did not address timber
4 management within those designated areas.

5 And I have a couple, I think, understandings there
6 that I'll tease out here. I don't know if we have
7 anybody -- I don't know if George from Showdown was able
8 to join us, it didn't sound like today, but I'll share
9 with the group and then he may come on later or there may
10 be somebody else that can help there as well. And then we
11 also have just some questions, like we've had with many
12 other topics, on just what is the rationale, trying to
13 connect the dots, the analysis, did it take into account
14 certain aspects.

15 So a lot of that was very straightforward in your
16 objections and very much easy to understand and be able to
17 help me understand in your objections the issues.
18 However, as always, there were parts of it that I just
19 need some help with and proposed remedies that I could use
20 some help with. And so I'll start out, like I normally
21 do, with some questions, and then we'll flux as need be to
22 meet the needs here and what works for you all on that.

23 And Rick, I think you're familiar, you were with us
24 yesterday, on how to raise your hand on the phone.

25 Shawn, it's star 9; right?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, that's right, Leanne and
2 Rick, star 9. And if we don't see you, we can always just
3 ask for you to take yourself off mute if you've got a
4 question or want to respond to any of Leanne's questions.

5 MS. MARTEN: Yes. I just don't want to lose the
6 phone. So thanks, Shawn. I just wanted to double-check
7 that for Rick so he's aware.

8 So let me jump in on a couple things that I've been
9 hearing, both what I read and then also frankly over the
10 last couple days. And Al and folks can help me out, and
11 Zach and others. I think most of you have all been on
12 other topics, so correct me if my understanding is
13 incorrect.

14 But I'm going to jump into a couple of the place-based
15 site-specific areas, Elkhorn wildlife Management Area.
16 And what I've been hearing very clearly over the last
17 several days, and what came up on this objection topic as
18 well, was very much the request and need to clarify that
19 the Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit area is just that,
20 it's for wildlife management unit. So there was proposed
21 wording that was suggested on how to reword a couple of
22 the components regarding that it's not suitable for timber
23 harvest; however, if there is a need, it's for certain
24 things and it's with wildlife being the foremost reason
25 for any kind of management, be it timber harvest in that

1 area. So really emphasizing wildlife and it's for
2 wildlife is the main emphasis. It doesn't mean other
3 things can't happen, but it has to all be done to benefit
4 the wildlife and the emphasis of that area.

5 Al, you say it much more eloquently than what just
6 came out of my mouth, but hopefully I didn't butcher it
7 too bad there.

8 And so the proposed wording I saw was really just
9 trying to clarify that and, in some cases, really just
10 putting that up front to make sure that it's underneath
11 that umbrella of the intent of that geographical area and
12 the emphasis of the wildlife management.

13 Is that fair, Al or others, for the Elkhorns?

14 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes. That's fair. You've
15 captured it I think exactly right on track. It's all
16 about the emphasis on the wildlife management area.

17 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Thank you.

18 And that was similar for the Showdown Ski Area. And
19 like I said, I don't think George or others joined, but
20 just to let you guys know, it was very similar on the
21 timber production not being suitable in the Showdown Ski
22 Area; however, making sure that we have something that
23 does allow it for safety purposes. You know, if you have
24 wind events; you know, the things that, for the human part
25 of it, we can definitely do some harvest in there or other

1 areas, you know, protecting facilities and infrastructure.

2 So if you have trees that are dead and dying or you
3 need to harvest and do it for guest safety, being a little
4 bit more specific in the wording in the components and the
5 plan and the guidelines and standards so it doesn't leave
6 it that it's absolutely a black-and-white you can never do
7 any kind of treatment. But when you do, similar to the
8 Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit, it's for a specific
9 purpose and it's not the same as general management of a
10 forested area on that. And we were provided in the
11 written objections some proposed wording on trying to
12 clarify that.

13 So I think that came out in a couple other areas that
14 I haven't named. But really trying to make sure that we
15 aren't just being seemingly black-and-white, that
16 sometimes there's safety concerns and other reasons where
17 we may have to do some management of the vegetation and
18 the timber in an area, but it's not the same as the
19 general forest designation on that.

20 And I don't think anybody joined us, Shawn, but if
21 they did from showdown or there's questions on that,
22 please throw them at me. But I just want to make sure
23 that we acknowledged that, because there was some proposed
24 remedies there.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thanks, Leanne. Like you

1 said, I don't see that George has joined us or anyone from
2 Showdown. But just maybe make a last call.

3 Is there anyone out there that would like to speak to
4 that issue or that topic that is an objector or interested
5 person?

6 Zach, did you want to jump in on that?

7 MR. ANGSTEAD: Just real quick. Nothing
8 important, but as a skier, I'd ask you, if you are going
9 to consider that for Showdown, you consider it also for
10 Teton -- the ski area on the Front.

11 MS. MARTEN: Yep. Great point, Zach. Yeah, not
12 having it be just one, but if it's going to be for safety
13 and some of that, make sure that we have it across the
14 forest and ski areas.

15 MR. ANGSTEAD: Yep.

16 MS. MARTEN: Thank you. Appreciate it.

17 So let me get to the other part and some of the
18 remedies and questions I have. And I'm not quite sure --
19 And again, you know, I don't have it by name who sent in
20 what objections on this, but there were a couple remedies
21 proposed that talked about -- and some of it that we just
22 talked about, so let me start there.

23 Bryan, I think you brought it up, Tom did, and others
24 in the previous conversation, about the desire and need to
25 have some additional flexibility within riparian

1 management zones, to be able to do management of the land
2 and timber harvest on that. And that came up in this one
3 as well, as to what designates suitable, what you can and
4 can't do within the riparian management zones, talking
5 about the State versus our -- you know, the 50-foot versus
6 100 and 200-foot. That very much came through in this
7 one.

8 we also had a question about providing an alternative
9 that cuts at or near sustained yield limit and disclose
10 the budget necessary. I need some help on that, and let
11 me explain why I need help other than it's just complex.

12 so under the planning rule, we have to show within our
13 budget what we can do, but then we have stuff in the EIS
14 and in the document about if there's an unconstrained
15 budget. Because we all know things flux there on that
16 part of it. So I get that. I've had a lot of discussions
17 with many of you and others on what that means or doesn't
18 mean, and I know there's different views of even how the
19 rule was written around that from industry and some
20 others. So I'm not trying to get into that part of it.

21 what I'm not sure is providing an alternative that is
22 closer to sustained yield, and my question with that is,
23 as you guys are aware, sustained yield is modeled on just
24 that, it's sustained yield. But with the multiple use of
25 the forest, there's always other things we have to take

1 into account. So I'm not sure if it's just that you think
2 we need one that just looks at sustained yield or if it
3 doesn't look like we took that into account, if there's a
4 full gap there or if it's connecting the dots.

5 I just couldn't track what it was that the objector
6 was looking for with this other this alternative. And I'm
7 sure it's much more complex than what I just asked about,
8 but anybody want to help me out with that on the desire
9 for an additional alternative and what I'm missing there?

10 MR. PARTIN: Well, this is Tom, and I might start
11 addressing that. And I think you couched it very well,
12 Leanne, on some of the concerns.

13 But, you know, if I might start at the beginning and
14 looking at the size of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National
15 Forest, which is about 2.9 million acres. And most of our
16 objections to the plan were based on the timber aspect of
17 it, primarily starting with the fact that only
18 388,000 acres are how you classify as suitable for timber
19 production, and that's a small part of the forest. We do
20 have other parts of the forest where timber management can
21 occur, but it has to be to the benefit of other resources.
22 And we think taking that look at it really doesn't satisfy
23 the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act because you really
24 don't take a look specifically at timber and how timber
25 should be looked at from that aspect alone as one of the

1 resources that the Forest is trying to manage. So that's
2 one part of it.

3 We did come up with -- the Forest came up with a
4 sustained yield number I believe of 57 million board feet.
5 None of the alternatives or none of the action items
6 really looked at how do we get at a sustained yield limit,
7 perhaps even in the short term -- And let me back up a
8 little bit by what I call the short term.

9 This forest has been through a major change in the
10 last decade, with the lodgepole pine infestations, the
11 Douglas-fir infestations, and you've got a problem on your
12 hands on how to deal with that and how to get back to
13 historic range of variability. But there was nothing in
14 the plan that really looked at or talked about a departure
15 from a consistent flow of harvest up to a sustained yield
16 level to get the forest back into balance on where it
17 should be. And I think we really missed an opportunity
18 there to take that look at it and to look at what the
19 forest really needs.

20 You've got some really good graphs in the forest plan
21 about where you want to be with your fire-resistant
22 species, such as ponderosa pine and larch. None of your
23 options gets you there in a time frame that really, to us,
24 makes sense. You've got some really nice graphs in there
25 about where you are as far as fire risk to the

1 communities, fire fuels loading. None of that really gets
2 to the point that it's assessed properly or taken care of
3 within the alternatives that are listed.

4 And again, we're talking about the land aspect and
5 what is important to get the forest back in balance.
6 Obviously, getting the forest back in balance is important
7 to the forest products industry because we're trying to
8 hold on and keep the existing facilities that we have that
9 really rely on the Helena-Lewis and Clark. And you know
10 those include IFG from Superior; they include Pyramid
11 Lumber from Seeley Lake; obviously, they include
12 Sun Mountain Lumber Company; they include RY; they include
13 a host of post-and-pole and smaller operations. And as I
14 was writing this and putting in my objection, it was
15 unfortunate that we found out that RY is shutting down
16 their plant in Townsend.

17 So, you know, these are the kind of focuses that I
18 think were really missed when you put your final plan out
19 there and really took a hard look at what needs to happen
20 on the landscape, what needs to happen with the timber
21 component, and what we really need to do to make sure that
22 we have a viable timber industry. You know, take little
23 sections that we were just talking about. For instance,
24 you know, if we wanted to take the hazard trees around ski
25 areas. It would be nice to take them out and have a

1 commercial product to help pay for that. But if we don't
2 have the sawmills and Bryan's loggers around, we're not
3 going to have that tool.

4 And I think it's really a chance here to look at the
5 workforce we have in the forest products industry, look at
6 those people as a tool to help manage your forest, what
7 the forest needs, and I think some of that was really
8 overlooked.

9 So that's my first shot. So I'll let you respond.

10 MS. MARTEN: No, I appreciate that.

11 And I know, Bryan, you had your hand up too.

12 I do have just a general question, and maybe for you
13 as well, Bryan. As written and as you are reading the
14 forest plan and Forest Supervisor Avey's draft decision,
15 do you see what you were looking at as a, my terms, a
16 desired feature prohibited as it's written in the plan?
17 And/or are you seeing it where it's just not highlighted
18 and emphasized and therefore you don't feel like the
19 importance of it is recognized?

20 MR. PARTIN: My point is -- I see that he's got a
21 desired future condition, which we all want to transition
22 a lot of our unhealthy stands into more fire-resistant
23 species, like pine larch, and get our older lodgepole
24 stands converted back to younger stands. But my point is,
25 Leanne, that I just don't think we're getting there in the

1 time frame that it should be gotten there under this plan.
2 which, you know, we're talking this plan is going to be
3 15, 20 years, might spread out to 30 years. But I think
4 we really have to look at, if we're talking about getting
5 healthy stands established, doing this in a quicker time
6 frame than what the plan currently is putting out there.

7 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So time frame is key as well.

8 MR. PARTIN: Right.

9 MS. MARTEN: Gotcha. Thank you. Very helpful.

10 Go ahead, Bryan.

11 MR. LORENZO: Yeah. So I was just going to
12 mention, in regards to the sustained yield, the
13 57 million, we'd love to see that stay at that level, and
14 for a couple reasons. We don't want to see that sized to
15 funding, even though realistically that happens. But I'm
16 seeing a couple things with some momentum on large,
17 long-term stewardship programs, that the private sector is
18 basically helping the Agency get to those goals.

19 Now, if you look at what logging has done, on the
20 Colville is a prime example, with those two projects. And
21 there is momentum coming this way in regards to that, and
22 we are supportive of that. So I think when we look at
23 budget constraints and funding, let's not back ourselves
24 against the wall where we leave potential acres that we
25 could treat.

1 A couple other things I'd like to mention too is, you
2 know, it seems to be the 35 percent with mechanical
3 treatment that gets put into forest plans. If you look at
4 ground impacts on newer equipment -- This forest plan was
5 written in the '80s when you were still using dozers as
6 your primary skidding. And we have showcased that we can
7 do minimal impacts to soils, and, if there is, you can
8 mitigate those concerns. The equipment that's being
9 manufactured now is not made for Montana and agency
10 ground. It's made for large private industrial ground and
11 you're seeing larger, bigger machines.

12 MS. MARTEN: Yes.

13 MR. LORENZO: So we need to -- And they work on
14 steeper slopes more effectively. A lot of times they're
15 skidding less drags up and down the mountains because they
16 can just pack more material. So I think that if we could
17 get to that 45, 50 percent, and maybe if you get there,
18 then you have some site-specific issues that need to be
19 mitigated.

20 You know, we've taken tours on some wench assist stuff
21 in Idaho with agency folks, both contracting officer,
22 soils folks, and we want to showcase, you know, what's
23 being done out there. And they're really surprised when
24 they're seeing the end results. And I think that's what
25 we need to look at, is end results.

1 So, you know, keep it at 57 is what we'd love to see.
2 I get your budget concerns. We've written our
3 congressional delegation in support of increased funding
4 for your capacity, especially when it comes to NEPA work.
5 We'd love to see you have five to ten years of NEPA work
6 on the shelf. And we continue to advocate for litigation
7 reform and NEPA reform as well. So I get it's a balance,
8 but I think there's opportunity that's coming east,
9 particularly out of the Colville, that we're going to see
10 those as an opportunity in the near future.

11 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. Very helpful. And yeah, with
12 Vaagen Brothers and the Colville and work there. I'm not
13 sure I'm quite tracking, though, Bryan on one part. The
14 35 percent and mechanical, are you asking that it's either
15 upped or it's the fact that we don't have a numerical
16 percentage and we leave something in there a little
17 differently so it's talking more the outcome as technology
18 and tools may shift into the future? Just help me with
19 that a little bit more, if you don't mind.

20 MR. LORENZO: Yeah, you bet. Good question. You
21 know, when you put 35 percent, it's a number out there,
22 but we need to see what's going to happen on the ground.
23 And that really limits your opportunity for treatment
24 mechanically. And we're looking at these dead lodgepole
25 pine, and the purchasers that are taking the risk that are

1 currently out there, both on the Helena-Lewis and Clark
2 and the projects, you can't get skyline people on the
3 ground, you can't ask them to put people on the ground in
4 these hazardous conditions. And that's the challenge. So
5 35 percent, a lot of ground you could do it on, but if
6 it's rocky and you have unstable soils, then that's a
7 no-go.

8 And I'm seeing in one document that I'm writing
9 comments on at Selway Saginaw in the Beaverhead-
10 Deer Lodge, they've got some flexibility built within that
11 35 percent that they consider going above. I just hate to
12 see that hard number in a forest plan, that that's what
13 you limit at.

14 And I think we get on the ground, we showcase what
15 needs to get done and we build some flexibility in
16 there -- we don't want to have soils issues, but I'm
17 thinking that we don't want to restrict mechanical systems
18 that are way more economical and safer to operate versus
19 skyline on especially this dead lodgepole. You can't put
20 your fire people or your personnel on the ground. We
21 can't expect your purchasers to take that risk either. So
22 just a couple things there.

23 MS. MARTEN: Yes. No, I hear you. That's very
24 helpful. And one of the things I hear you asking for
25 is -- and number or not, but really looking at how, I

1 believe it's a guideline is written. Because, you know,
2 one of the things with a guideline, you have the guideline
3 and the objectives that we're trying to meet. If you
4 deviate from the guideline, you still have to show how
5 you're meeting those objectives. That's one way, you
6 know, of trying to build in some of that flexibility. But
7 you have to be real clear on what the outcome is and what
8 the objective is that you're trying to meet.

9 And so what I hear you saying is taking a hard look at
10 that and make sure we aren't inadvertently getting
11 ourselves backed up into a corner that is saying we can
12 only meet it one way and only one way, the outcome in only
13 one way.

14 MR. LORENZO: Yeah, I agree, the outcome and
15 what -- the end result of what you want.

16 MS. MARTEN: End result. Yeah.

17 MR. LORENZO: And then give the flexibility with
18 the purchaser to have some flexibility.

19 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Great. Very helpful. Thank
20 you very much. Appreciate that.

21 Shawn, I'm going to ask you to help me, because I
22 think there's some other hands going up here.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. I think Tom wanted to jump
24 back in, and then let's see if anyone else wants to bring
25 their voice into the conversation too.

1 So Tom.

2 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. Just to add to what Brian
3 said regarding other opportunities out there, Leanne. In
4 the plan, it was brought up that the timber harvest levels
5 could be increased with extra dollars, but that would come
6 at a cost to other resources. And I don't totally agree
7 with that because we've got other tools coming along, like
8 GNA and shared stewardship, that is happening in Montana.
9 And I think the Forest didn't look at that. They didn't
10 look at other opportunities where we have partners and, as
11 Bryan mentioned, other opportunities for somebody to do
12 the NEPA work. So I think we're missing a lot of
13 opportunities at who all is interested in increasing the
14 pace and scale and methods of getting that done, and that
15 part of it was really, really short on that.

16 And I can stop now, but before the session is over, I
17 would like to just address the economics and what I felt
18 the shortfall of the economics are in this project and
19 really what the timber industry and that sector brings to
20 Montana and the counties. So that's it for now.

21 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks, Tom, on that.

22 You know, one of the things I want to -- a couple
23 things, and I think I brought it up earlier, but I just
24 want to recognize we have some objectors who aren't
25 joining us today, of course, that are coming from a

1 different perspective in that we didn't take into account
2 climate change and we didn't look hard enough at the
3 effects of that on the ground; and therefore, they feel we
4 have too much land designated as suitable. So as always,
5 you know, there's different perspectives that we're taking
6 a hard look at from that.

7 One of the things on the budget part of it and the
8 good neighbor authority and shared stewardship, you know,
9 what I hear you saying there, Tom, and Bryan, I heard a
10 little bit of what you were saying, is really making sure
11 and taking a hard look at how the plan is worded and how
12 Forest Supervisor Avey's decision is worded, build into it
13 as much as possible flexibility for future unknown
14 authorities, tools, technology. And we hear this across
15 the board, not just with vegetation. You guys know that.
16 It's recreation and other things as well.

17 As much as we like to try and predict the future, I
18 don't think there's anybody on this call that can say they
19 can say what's going to be developed two years from now.
20 Harvestability, Bryan, like you brought up; some of the
21 new equipment and the impacts or mitigations on the
22 resources now compared to even five years ago on some of
23 that is phenomenal. Recreation, same thing.

24 So really, just making sure somehow that the outcome
25 and what we're looking for is real clear, and we aren't

1 too prescriptive on the tools and the technologies and the
2 how. And I say that as not just a statement, but as a
3 question. I think that's what I'm hearing in just
4 different examples that you guys have given and trying to
5 make sure we're taking a look across the board at that.
6 Is that a fair assessment on my part?

7 MR. PARTIN: I think that's very well said. I
8 think you captured it. With what's out there now and new
9 things that might be coming, we have to be willing to
10 embrace those and at least acknowledge they're out there.

11 MS. MARTEN: Bryan, was that fair? I put words
12 in your mouth. I want to make sure I don't put wrong ones
13 in your mouth.

14 MR. LORENZO: No, I agree 100 percent with what
15 you said. I echo that. Thank you.

16 MS. MARTEN: Thank you. This has been very
17 helpful trying to, again, get clarity on my part.

18 So Tom, the economics, what do you feel is the gap on
19 our economic analysis?

20 MR. PARTIN: Well, I think you talk about the
21 importance of economics. I think you didn't bring in the
22 economics as far as the impacts to the counties, the
23 importance of -- Some of these counties are 75, 80 percent
24 national forest within their bounds and they're made up of
25 national forests. And what happens on the national forest

1 is really important to the counties, the dollars that come
2 back. The jobs that are created from management, whether
3 it be forest management or restoration of any kind, really
4 draws and comes back to these counties and these
5 communities. And I think there could have been a better
6 job of doing that.

7 But what really got my attention is when we were
8 talking about the jobs and the dollars from where we are
9 at the current situation, which was Alternative A, and I
10 have some specific numbers in there that -- In timber,
11 under where we are now, we're saying that we are creating
12 119 jobs -- And this year, we produced 37 million board
13 feet on the forest, and it's saying under current we had
14 119 jobs. And then when we're going to go up to our
15 preferred Alternative F, which is 27 million board feet,
16 we create 616 jobs. And there's a disconnect on how those
17 statistics and how those numbers are used in the plan.

18 And I could be missing something, but I -- It's a
19 simple look on my part, but I just didn't know how you get
20 there. Your current plan that you have shows 22 million
21 feet with both forests, and where you're going on just
22 timber products is 27. So you're raising up 5 million
23 board feet, but it's a quantum leap in jobs and dollars
24 that you're showing in your economics.

25 It's both this one, and you're also going to hear from

1 me on the Custer Gallatin. And I don't know -- If you can
2 tell me where I'm fatally flawed, I'd be happy to look at
3 it.

4 MS. MARTEN: I hear you, Tom, on having some
5 clarity. So there's a couple things -- with taking a risk
6 of sticking my own foot in my mouth here, but, you know,
7 of course, the range of our PTSQ or potential timber sale
8 quantity, it's a range. You know, and the 27 is the lower
9 part and it goes up. And then, of course, you have the
10 sustained yield.

11 And as we talked about, sustained yield has -- when we
12 do the modeling, just sustained yield, that's one thing,
13 but as we're looking at our potential timber sale
14 quantity, the PTSQ, it takes into account all these other
15 natural resource multiple uses that we have to take into
16 account.

17 The economics is similar on the numbers you're seeing,
18 but -- I put this out, but I'm going to put a caveat
19 because we need to take a look at it and make it clearer.
20 And people can double-check me on the team. The number of
21 jobs and the money isn't necessarily just the timber side
22 of it. You also have recreation, you have a bunch of
23 other things that tie into the alternatives. Now, not
24 knowing the exact table and stuff that you're looking at,
25 I may be misspeaking there.

1 So we'll take a look at that. It sounds like that was
2 included in some comments. But we can get the details
3 from our economists and try and get more information and
4 answer that question to make sure it's clear on where
5 those numbers came from and what was included in those
6 numbers. Because I can see where it's confusing.

7 MR. PARTIN: Yeah. It's Table 243 and 245 in the
8 final EIS.

9 MS. MARTEN: Perfect.

10 MR. PARTIN: If you can help me out and help me
11 understand it, I'd appreciate it.

12 MS. MARTEN: Okay. That's great. And people
13 behind the scenes are taking notes on that, so I'm sure
14 they just captured that for us. So we'll do some
15 follow-up, Tom.

16 MR. PARTIN: Thank you.

17 MS. MARTEN: Go ahead, Bryan.

18 MR. LORENZO: Yeah, I was just going to mention
19 that BBR is the study that we use, where there's 12 to
20 17 jobs depending on what state, I think 17 for Idaho,
21 12 for Montana, based upon every million board feet of
22 timber harvest. So I'd like to see you compare those
23 numbers first, the BBR numbers, and see where we're
24 flawed. Or maybe you are, I don't know.

25 MS. MARTEN: No, that's great. Because I'm

1 familiar with -- I've worked with Jason in the past and
2 you and others on the BBR. So that will be something I'll
3 have to get to our economist and see what numbers he used
4 and how he used them and how the BBR compares and help me
5 out there.

6 Great question. I'm not an economist, so I'm not even
7 going to try on that part of it.

8 MR. LORENZO: And this may not be specific to the
9 forest plan, but when it comes to economics, you know, we
10 had a contract inked at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation;
11 we ink it annually. Last year, the one thing that come
12 out of that BBR study that's astonishing between Idaho and
13 Montana, that we average one month less of work on the
14 ground. And when I'm talking about flexibility with your
15 ologists, it's a huge -- it's a major concern for our
16 workforce going forward, the limiting operating season
17 that hamstringing our contractors.

18 It's probably not a forest plan, but while I've got
19 you in front, I'm just going to echo that it's a major
20 concern for us going forward.

21 MS. MARTEN: Okay. No, I hear you. Appreciate
22 it. Thanks.

23 So I will say that this has been extremely helpful. I
24 wanted to make sure, if there's any other voices, that I'm
25 not missing them. But I think I got my questions answered

1 that I needed to help put some context, and the remedies
2 that were being proposed and where they were coming from.

3 So Shawn, I'm going to let you help us with this from
4 this standpoint, make sure there isn't something else
5 somebody wants to make sure they get in the room with for
6 us. But I think I'm good with at least my questions that
7 I had.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thanks, Leanne.

9 And thanks, everyone, who contributed to the
10 conversation. Just based on Leanne's offer, are there
11 other thoughts, questions, or issues that you would like
12 to surface right now while we've got the time? You can
13 either raise your hand by clicking on your Raise Hand
14 button or give me a wave, or if you're on the phone, go
15 ahead and take yourself off mute and bring your voice into
16 the conversation.

17 Zach.

18 MS. MARTEN: Go ahead, Zach.

19 MR. ANGSTEAD: So this isn't actually -- I'm not
20 speaking for MWA at this point. I'm speaking as -- I
21 don't know. I commented on the EIS two years ago as a
22 caver. And so from the 1986 Lewis and Clark plan to the
23 most current revision, there were some definite standards
24 regarding caves and forestation and, you know, doing
25 treatments around caves, especially in regards to, like,

1 sedimentation and ground-disturbing activities. And so
2 those same standards aren't in this plan, which is fine
3 because it's covered under the Federal Cave Resource
4 Protection Act.

5 But the Helena-Lewis and Clark has recently begun
6 doing a cave management plan, and I'd just like to see --
7 I know the resources aren't super there to put a lot of
8 time into that, but I would like to see that move forward
9 and make sure that those kind of protections that were in
10 the 1986 plan continue forward into some sort of plan,
11 whether it be a cave management plan or something similar.
12 So that's all.

13 MS. MARTEN: I appreciate that. And I appreciate
14 the recognition that one of the things we try to do is not
15 repeat law in the forest plan. But there's a lot of
16 different laws out there and you have to be familiar with
17 them sometimes to recognize that it's in an act already
18 and doesn't necessarily have to be in the forest plan.
19 But I will tell you I heard you and I saw Sara nodding her
20 head, she heard you, on the cave management plan.

21 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Zach.

22 Anyone else want to bring a comment forward to Leanne
23 just now?

24 I'm not seeing anyone else, Leanne.

25 MS. MARTEN: Well, as always, I really appreciate

1 it, folks. Extremely helpful. It helped put things in
2 context for me. I know the team behind the scenes was
3 taking notes on a couple of the very specific questions
4 and those tables and stuff, Tom, and some things there
5 that you brought up. And I thank you for just your
6 continued interest.

7 And I'm going to turn it over to Shawn, because I
8 believe we start going into a lunch break, and then we
9 have one more topic after lunch that some of you may be
10 partaking in, some may not from that standpoint. I think
11 it's on range. But if you're not partaking in it, just a
12 big thank you again for your continued interest and
13 joining us today and, many of you, over the last couple
14 days as well.

15 Shawn, it's all yours.

16 MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thanks, Leanne.

17 And thanks again, everyone, for the conversation. I
18 thought it was really useful. And again, if you're not
19 able to join this afternoon, appreciate you being with us
20 the last couple of days. And as Leanne mentioned I think
21 yesterday, her letter back to Forest Supervisor Avey will
22 be made available when it's done, and so everyone can see
23 what her responses look like. You know, she's not making
24 decisions just now, but really using this as a chance to
25 understand your concerns.

1 So we are going to take a break now. And we do have
2 one final topic on range. That will begin at 1:30 this
3 afternoon, and I invite everyone who is interested in
4 being a part of that conversation either as an objector or
5 interested party or member of the public to join us then.
6 The Zoom link stays the same, and I'll go ahead and leave
7 it open again so that people can just mute themselves, or
8 click back on the link when we get back to that part of
9 the conversation.

10 I'll put up a slide here in a second that just
11 provides the link to the briefing paper on range for those
12 that are interested in seeing that or who haven't had a
13 chance to look at it yet. But other than that, I think
14 we're all set until we come back at 1:30.

15 Unless there's anything from you, Leanne or Sara.

16 All right. Well, thanks again, folks.

17 MR. PARTIN: This is Tom Partin, and I'd like to
18 make one comment directly to Leanne and her team. And I
19 don't want to come across as a whiner on behalf of the
20 forest products industry. On the other hand, I just want
21 to say what a good job Region 1 does. They lead the
22 country in many aspects of their management strategies.
23 They are a leader in many of the tools that are out there
24 and available for them. And while we have some disputes
25 on how we think they should manage in some areas, I just

1 wanted to give them a pat on the back and some kudos for
2 what they are doing and the good job they're doing. So
3 with that, thank you.

4 MS. MARTEN: Great. Hey, thanks, Tom. I really
5 appreciate it. And, you know, I have the honor of being
6 the one that gets to see that and brag about all the
7 wonderful employees that are behind the scenes doing all
8 the hard work on the ground. But Sara and I will
9 definitely pass that on. And we couldn't do it without
10 you and others. You know, it's okay to have healthy
11 disagreements. That's how we make better informed
12 decisions. So appreciate it.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Tom, for bringing that
14 forward.

15 Well, thanks again, all. We will take a quick
16 break here and see a lot of you back at 1:30. If not,
17 thanks for joining us and we'll see you sometime down the
18 road.

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RANGE

Thursday, October 1, 2020, 1:30 p.m. - 2:09 p.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

FACILITATOR: SHAWN JOHNSON, University of Montana

FOREST SERVICE:

LEANNE MARTEN, Regional forester/reviewing officer
SARA MAYBEN, Deputy forest supervisor
DEB ENTWISTLE, Team leader
LORI WOLLAN, GIS specialist
SCOTT NAGEL, Watersheds
WENDY CLARK, wildlife biologist
AMANDA MILBURN, Timber/civic culturalist
KYLE SCHMITT, Range and weeds
ELIZABETH CASSELLI, Recreation and other uses
LIZ SMITH, Writer/editor
JENNY WOODS, HLC NP planning staff
CHIARA CIPRIANO, Public affairs specialist
TIMORY PEEL, Regional Planner
CORY HUTCHINSON, Administrative Review Coordinator
ERIC ARCHER, Fishery biologist

OBJECTORS AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

AL CHRISTOPHERSEN, Big Elk Divide Restoration Comm.
JOCELYN LEROUX, Western Watersheds Project
TOM PARTIN, American Forest Resource Council
RICK KERR, Choteau

** NOTE: (Inaudible) denotes inability to distinguish words due to technology

1 MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome
2 back to many of you and hello to some new faces. It's
3 1:30. Glad to welcome you back to this next issue topic
4 of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest management
5 plan revision objection resolution meeting.

6 For those I haven't met yet, my name is Shawn Johnson.
7 I'm with the University of Montana, and I'm helping
8 facilitate the conversation between all of you today.
9 Just seeing a few people jumping back into the Zoom space
10 here, so we'll take our time getting started.

11 Probably old hat for a lot of you guys by now, but
12 I'll run through some of the same steps as before. If
13 you're new to Zoom and want to become more acquainted with
14 the features, I'll direct your attention to the bottom of
15 your screen or the bottom of your Zoom window. The
16 buttons you'll be needing to find are the Mute button,
17 which is on the far left. Please keep yourself in mute if
18 you're not talking, and that will make sure that we can
19 all hear one another.

20 The video is the next one over. We ask that objectors
21 and interested persons turn on their video for the
22 conversation with the reviewing officer, with Leanne
23 today. Everyone else is invited to watch with your video
24 off and just listen in.

25 The other two buttons of note are the Participants

1 button. That one is important because, especially for
2 those of you that will be joining the conversation here
3 with Leanne, that's where you find the Raise Your Hand
4 button. So if you click the Participants button, that
5 will bring up a new field with everyone's name. At the
6 bottom of that, there will be an opportunity or button to
7 raise your hand. And that's helpful for me as the
8 facilitator and Leanne as well.

9 And then finally, the chat field at the bottom, we use
10 that to post some relevant information here at the start
11 of each of these different sessions. So you can see that
12 I just dropped some information into the chat asking
13 folks, if you haven't already, to rename your Zoom box
14 with your full name and your organization, if applicable.
15 And you do that by hovering over your box on the Zoom
16 screen. There's three dots in the upper right-hand
17 corner. Click that, find the Rename field, and then go
18 ahead and rename yourself with your first name, last name,
19 and organization.

20 For those who are joining from the press, we've got a
21 media contact here, so please be in touch with Chiara.
22 And her contact information is provided. If anyone runs
23 into technical assistance issues or has a question about
24 the planning process, Cody Hutchinson and Timory Peel are
25 on standby with those coordinates.

1 And then for anyone wanting closed captioning of
2 today's meeting, there's a link to that. Just be aware,
3 that link to the closed captioning does pop out into a new
4 field, so that will take another browser for you to be
5 able to view the closed captioning.

6 A note too that we are having today's meeting
7 transcribed by a court reporter, and so a reminder to
8 speak slowly and clearly whenever possible. It helps us
9 all understand one another and will certainly help Cheryl
10 capture our conversation.

11 As we get started here on our last topic of range, I
12 would invite folks who are objectors or interested persons
13 to go ahead and turn your cameras on at this point. And
14 here in just a second, we'll invite you to introduce
15 yourself if you haven't said hi yet today, and that will
16 give us a chance to test your audio and visual equipment.
17 And then following that, we will turn it over to Leanne to
18 guide us through her understanding of the issues and some
19 of the key questions she has with all of you.

20 And just a final note on how we're working through
21 this and some ground rules, just a reminder that our focus
22 really is on building that shared understanding. And you
23 guys have done a terrific job over the last three days
24 really focusing on, you know, providing clarity and
25 helping answer questions. You're really sharing the space

1 well, and so I think everything is working out really
2 well. But a reminder to continue to do that, focus on
3 understanding issues, asking questions, listening to and
4 respecting one another's points of view.

5 So again, if you haven't yet done so and want to come
6 forward as an objector or interested person on the topic
7 of range, I'd just invite you to turn your videocamera on
8 now and we'll start with a round of introductions.

9 It looks like Al is coming back to join us. Al, I
10 think your video and audio have been working well all day,
11 but do you want to say hi?

12 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Yes. Good afternoon.
13 Al Christophersen with the Elkhorn Restoration Committee,
14 now known as the Big Elk Divide Restoration Committee, and
15 this afternoon with the Elkhorn Working Group. Thank you.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you, Al.

17 Jocelyn, welcome back. Do you want to say hi?

18 MS. LEROUX: Yep. Hi. Jocelyn Leroux with
19 Western Watersheds Project.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Excellent. Thank you, Jocelyn.

21 Just seeing if there's anyone else here. Anyone on
22 the phone that I may have missed?

23 Okay. If anyone does join by phone or is on the phone
24 now, just a reminder that you can toggle your mute off and
25 on with a star 6 and to raise your hand with a star 9.

1 That helps me to see who might have a comment or question
2 out there if you're an objector or interested person who
3 is just calling in.

4 All right. One more person joining, but I don't think
5 they are an objector on this one.

6 So Leanne, I'm going to go ahead and turn it back to
7 you and we'll jump right in.

8 MS. MARTEN: Great. Thanks.

9 And thanks again, everyone, for joining.

10 Great to see you again, Jocelyn and Al. Appreciate
11 you joining here this afternoon.

12 so for this topic, I have just a couple questions. I
13 don't know if we'll need the full hour, but if we do,
14 we've got it set aside. But if we don't, we're not going
15 to waste your time to stay on for the sake of staying on.
16 So help me out and make sure that I don't miss anything.
17 So if I don't ask a specific question, by all means,
18 please jump in on anything you want to make sure I'm aware
19 of.

20 so a couple things. You know, as you can imagine with
21 range, like all the topics I think we've covered over the
22 last three days, we have a difference of thoughts, and
23 from one side of the spectrum to the other on allow
24 grazing, don't allow grazing on National Forest System
25 lands. And particularly narrowed down to special areas

1 that are designated, such as designated wilderness,
2 designated other geographical areas based on, you know,
3 national congressional law, wilderness study areas,
4 recommended wilderness, and then some of the other areas.
5 So there's some different perspectives on that that we've
6 heard.

7 Also have been hearing about, very specific about
8 livestock grazing and wilderness character, and that ties
9 into your WSAs, designated wilderness, and particularly
10 recommended wilderness from that. And then there is a
11 general comment about not having a sufficient analysis for
12 grazing. I don't know if that came from -- I know in the
13 written ones, there's some specific things that the
14 written objections were looking for, but I want to make
15 sure if there's a big gap here or if it was not
16 understanding the analysis we did and connecting the dots
17 or, you know, disagreeing with the interpretation or kind
18 of a little bit of all that.

19 And then we had noxious weeds, a concern that we
20 didn't sufficiently address noxious weeds from that.

21 So one of the remedies that I had a question about
22 that was talked about, and I'm going to go backwards and
23 talk noxious weeds, was performing a forest-wide
24 assessment with noxious weeds and adding to the
25 sufficiency. And I guess the main question I had with

1 that is the forest plan doesn't prohibit doing a
2 forest-wide assessment, so is it just a desire as a part
3 of the forest planning process or did -- If one of you
4 happened to bring that up, were you seeing something that
5 prohibits us from doing that the way the revised forest
6 plan is currently proposed and written? I just want to
7 make sure there wasn't something there I was missing.

8 Go ahead, Jocelyn.

9 MS. LEROUX: Yeah. I actually think that that
10 was me that brought that up. And it wasn't that the
11 forest plan prohibits an assessment of that. It was that
12 we believe that there should have been a better assessment
13 of noxious weeds forest-wide during the forest planning
14 process, specifically relating to livestock grazing and
15 livestock grazing allotments.

16 And this really gets back into several of our other
17 comments too, is that there wasn't really a comprehensive
18 analysis of the land health of the grazing allotments and
19 there were no changes or interim standards proposed. And
20 so yeah, just doing a full analysis of noxious weeds at
21 the planning level.

22 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So when it comes to the
23 forest planning and doing it at that level versus, well,
24 outside the planning process but still doing it
25 forest-wide I hear real clear. But I want to tease out a

1 little bit on the allotments. And I know you're familiar
2 with the allotment management planning process versus the
3 forest planning. So can you help me understand where you
4 see we're missing something by doing it by allotment
5 management planning versus doing it at the forest planning
6 level for grazing? Not just for noxious weeds but for
7 grazing.

8 MS. LEROUX: Yeah. So I think this kind of goes
9 back to some of the conversations we were having on the
10 first day of when you're doing things at the forest
11 planning level versus the site-specific project level.
12 And with the allotment management plan, I think that
13 that's a good system if it's actually utilized well. And
14 so the Helena-Lewis and Clark has only had two-thirds of
15 their active allotments with allotment management plans
16 since the creation of the Helena and then the separate
17 Lewis and Clark management plan. So it's 34 years, and
18 not all of the grazing allotments have allotment
19 management plans that have been updated.

20 And so our biggest concern, then, is that that means
21 that there is all of this grazing land that isn't actually
22 being assessed, and especially I think I commented in our
23 comments that that leaves certain allotments to not be
24 reviewed for up to 50 years, if not more. And so that's
25 clearly not a proper analysis.

1 And so including a schedule to actually complete those
2 or just completing it at the planning level, reducing the
3 grazing program until you can actually do NEPA analysis on
4 the active grazing allotments.

5 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Okay, great on that. And so
6 I hear a couple of things. It's definitely the time frame
7 and the amount of time to do the allotments. And, of
8 course, you know, we've got the Rescissions Act and all
9 those things through the years that have tied into working
10 through site-specific allotment management planning.

11 But the fact that it's either at the forest planning
12 or having something in there that gives more confidence
13 and establishes something that says it's not going to be
14 40 years down the road or 50 years down the road or even
15 20 years, just more timely looking at that, and then the
16 comprehensive look. Is that -- Okay, on that part of it.

17 And I guess, you know, from the standpoint of the
18 areas such as -- I know we talked about it the other day,
19 so I just want to make sure, and Al, this is related to
20 you too -- like, with recommended wilderness areas and
21 wilderness character, Elkhorn wildlife Management Unit,
22 it's really looking at the analysis, what I think I
23 understand, the analysis of grazing for those
24 characteristics. And there's a strong sentiment not even
25 to allow it in the designated wilderness areas

1 particularly, and then recommended wilderness, because it
2 could take away from future Congress action on those
3 areas. But it's not even analyzing it as much as, in
4 those areas, just not allowing it is what I heard pretty
5 clear.

6 And Jocelyn, I can't remember if that was your
7 objection or somebody else's, but there is definitely some
8 difference of just it shouldn't even be allowed in some of
9 those congressionally designated areas.

10 MS. LEROUX: Yeah.

11 MS. MARTEN: Is that fair?

12 MS. LEROUX: We included that in our objection.

13 MS. MARTEN: And I guess I'm keying into
14 recommended wilderness more because those don't have
15 legislative action. You know, the other ones are
16 legislated, so it's what's in the legislation that's
17 allowed or not allowed. So I really was keying into more
18 the recommended on that part.

19 And Al, can you help me understand, and help me
20 remember part of it too, for the Elkhorn wildlife
21 Management Unit and livestock grazing, there was concerns
22 with that. Was it the interaction or was it not believing
23 it should be part of that special area? Can you just help
24 me tease that out? Because I don't recall what, with
25 livestock grazing, the issue there was.

1 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: You know, we didn't file a
2 specific objection on the grazing. We've had a lot of
3 comments on the draft and earlier about the monitoring of
4 the grazing allotments relative to wildlife values. But
5 we didn't file an objection.

6 we've talked a lot more about noxious weeds themselves
7 and the inventory and the follow-through with, like,
8 integrated noxious weed management plans, either setting
9 the framework for that in the forest plan or something
10 that lays it out that when a project is brought forward,
11 that that project needs to carry an integrated noxious
12 weed management plan with it.

13 we're just seeing so much area that's being gobbled by
14 weeds, and it's big, and without the integrated approach,
15 I'm afraid there isn't enough horsepower to try and get at
16 all of it every day (inaudible). That's been our issue.

17 MS. MARTEN: Yeah. No, that helps in the weeds,
18 and some of it overlaps, but noxious weeds is obviously
19 more than just grazing and that part of it.

20 So the other thing, then, that I had a question on, it
21 was a remedy about including additional plan direction
22 designed to reduce grazing and its impacts on rangeland
23 conditions, such as providing opportunities for grazing,
24 I've got to look at the wording here, grazing permit
25 buyouts.

1 And Jocelyn, I think that was yours, and I'm just
2 curious. Can you expand on that? Because I'm not
3 tracking with the grazing permit buyouts and tying that
4 into further plan direction. So can you just help me
5 understand what you're getting at there?

6 MS. LEROUX: Yeah. So grazing permit buyout has
7 been a tool that's been used in a lot of different
8 forests, across different BLM lands throughout the West.
9 And it just provides for a specific opportunity to restore
10 certain allotments. And so having specific language in
11 the forest management plan then gives that opportunity
12 down the line for, say, if the allotment can be used for
13 wildlife and plant habitat and to improve the ecosystem,
14 and that you have a willing permittee that is interested
15 in getting their permit bought out, and then it saves that
16 allotment as wildlife habitat and for ecosystem
17 characteristics in perpetuity. So it would retire the
18 permit forever.

19 MS. MARTEN: So having something that leaves it
20 open to get willing partners on both sides, that there's
21 opportunities. It doesn't have to be an allotment, even
22 just a vacant allotment --

23 MS. LEROUX: Correct.

24 MS. MARTEN: You can do something to keep it up
25 to manage it differently than as a grazing allotment.

1 MS. LEROUX: Yeah. And there's specific language
2 that we included in our objection for that, and it was
3 done in the Blue Mountain forest plan in 2018 as a
4 reference.

5 MS. MARTEN: And that's where it came from.
6 Okay. So that helps. I haven't done that a whole lot and
7 I wanted to make sure I was understanding the purpose
8 behind it as much as the tool. I mean, it's a tool, but
9 more importantly the outcome you were looking for there.
10 Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

11 And Jocelyn, I know you were shaking your head, and I
12 say this more for others that may be listening in, we did
13 have a remedy about disallowing grazing in wilderness and
14 wilderness study areas, and I just want to make it clear
15 that, you know, we manage those areas based on the
16 legislation that designated them, and some of those
17 legislative acts designated that you continue with grazing
18 if it was in there. So, you know, it does vary on the
19 formally designated areas that are in law, how the law was
20 written on opportunities within those areas.

21 And like I said, Jocelyn, I know you're aware of that.
22 That's why I distinguished with recommended wilderness
23 versus the ones that are distinguished with law earlier
24 for other members of the public just listening in on that.

25 And then the last thing that I was just curious

1 about -- and then anything else you guys want to share.
2 But the last question I really had was, you know, part of
3 what I saw a couple places, and I know it's in written
4 objections, but I'm just curious if there were -- There
5 was general consensus in a couple of the objectors'
6 letters that the analysis just wasn't adequate for
7 grazing.

8 And I'm wondering if there's anything -- Was it
9 certain areas of the Helena-Lewis and Clark that are of
10 higher concern where the analysis wasn't showing? I know
11 riparian areas came up, the soils, I mean, the resources
12 with grazing. But I just didn't know if there was
13 something else behind that other than just we didn't do
14 what you thought we should have done to really look at the
15 larger impact cumulative -- disclose the cumulative
16 impacts of grazing, beneficial and adverse, to the land.

17 So I just wanted to make sure there wasn't something I
18 was missing, if it that meets that, if it's a little bit
19 more specific, or just making sure I'm aware of what's
20 really behind that general statement.

21 MS. LEROUX: I can speak to that. So from our
22 perspective, the forest plan was lacking in any
23 comprehensive analysis of the grazing program. There was
24 only the action alternatives and the no action
25 alternative, and across none of those did any of the

1 acreage available for grazing change. And that wasn't
2 based on any analysis of the actual resources that are
3 there.

4 There's multiple locations within the forest plan and
5 the FEIS that state the negative impacts from cattle
6 grazing, yet there's not any consistent data. I think the
7 most recent forest-wide assessment was 2006 or 2009, and a
8 lot of the vegetation data came from the '90s, and so it's
9 just really out of date. And then the capability and
10 suitability analysis found that only 34 percent of active
11 grazing allotments are suitable for grazing.

12 And so yeah, I guess that was our big concern, is that
13 there's not -- it's kind of a mishmash of this and that,
14 but it doesn't translate well and there's clearly nothing
15 comprehensive about the grazing program.

16 MS. MARTEN: Okay. So the comprehensiveness of
17 it, the date of the data being used, if we have updated
18 analysis data -- or, excuse me, data to put into the
19 analysis that's more recent to be able to base what I hear
20 you saying on staying as is versus if there should have
21 been a change. You didn't see where, you know, staying as
22 is, the rationale and the support for that. You're not
23 seeing why there wasn't more put in there on why we either
24 stayed or why there should have been a change.

25 MS. LEROUX: Correct. Yeah. And then again, it

1 just pushes everything off to the future site-specific
2 analysis that may or may not ever happen.

3 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Gotcha. So back to what we
4 were talking about, like you said the other day, planning
5 versus project and where that all fits in. Okay.

6 And if it goes to the -- what I heard you say just a
7 little bit ago, I believe, also, even when you add to it
8 the plan level versus site-specific allotment management
9 plans, if you do, then the other thing to add to that is
10 the time; i.e., if you're going to do it at the project
11 level or the allotment level, when, and it can't be
12 20 years down the road, the timeliness of that.
13 Preference at the plan level but, you know, the in between
14 there.

15 MS. LEROUX: Yes.

16 MS. MARTEN: That makes sense on that part of it.
17 So I guess, you know, those are the questions I had.
18 That helps put in context on, you know, just making sure I
19 was understanding the comments, and that helps put it more
20 in perspective for me from that and the desires.

21 But I don't want to miss anything. So other things
22 you want to make sure I'm aware of or, based on my
23 questions, other things that popped in your mind that you
24 want to make sure that I'm understanding or, more
25 importantly, that I'm not misunderstanding?

1 You know, your objections, and particularly yours,
2 Jocelyn, but a few of the others we got, they're detailed
3 and they give us, you know, specific information, which I
4 really appreciate. So those are clear, you know, in your
5 wording and examples. So I don't want to just have a
6 repeat of that. But just want to give the opportunity --

7 And Shawn, I don't know if anybody else joined via
8 phone that was an interested person or objector, but I
9 don't want to miss that either. So I'll just open it up
10 to folks, because this answered my questions from that
11 standpoint.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thanks, Leanne. I don't see
13 that anyone, you know, joined us by the phone, but
14 let's -- we've got a small enough group here, let's just
15 ask folks and see if we've gotten to everyone's issues.

16 So Jocelyn, back to you. Is there anything you'd want
17 to raise in front of Leanne here while we've got the
18 opportunity?

19 MS. LEROUX: I think I covered that, and, like
20 Leanne said, the rest of our objection is pretty detailed
21 in what we were asking. And I guess just to add on to the
22 whole timeline of things, one of the remedies we suggested
23 is that until you're actually able to do all of the NEPA
24 assessment on the grazing allotments, implementing some
25 more stringent interim standards so that the resources do

1 not continue to be degraded.

2 MS. MARTEN: And I did see that. Thank you. You
3 did have that as the in between.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Jocelyn.

5 How about you, Al? Anything else you want to add?

6 MR. CHRISTOPHERSEN: Not specifically on any of
7 the topics we've covered.

8 If you've got a second, Leanne and all of your folks
9 there, I want to thank you for the opportunity to help
10 clarify and restate and explain and answer your questions
11 on all of this stuff. The Elkhorn Restoration Committee
12 and now the Big Elk Divide Group and the Elkhorn Working
13 Group, we all stand ready to work with Supervisor Avey and
14 the forest staff there to work on figuring out some
15 language that works for all of us that clarifies and kind
16 of resolves the objections and deals with other comments
17 and things.

18 It's unfortunate there's quite a few people that
19 haven't joined that are missing an opportunity to share
20 and be heard, not only by you but everybody else. I think
21 that's too bad. But we certainly appreciate the
22 opportunity the Forest has given us to work through all
23 this process with them and their staff. They have been
24 very good to work with. Timely. Have always welcomed us
25 when we've asked for meetings of staff or people to get

1 comments and to get data and provide feedback. So we
2 appreciate all that.

3 And as our Big Elk Divide Group gets a little more
4 comfortable and a much larger footprint, we'll become
5 active with projects across a much larger landscape than
6 just the Elkhorns that we've been involved in in the past.
7 So again, thank you very much. We appreciate the time and
8 the opportunity and look forward to working with the
9 Forest to get all this stuff figured out. Thank you.

10 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Al. I appreciate it. And I
11 hear what you're saying about others not, unfortunately,
12 being able to join us. But as you're talking with those
13 other folks, please just reassure them that doesn't mean
14 we're not paying attention to their objections and their
15 input, and we take that all very seriously. We recognize
16 it's hard for everybody, in their lives, to join us at
17 times that we set up. So we do our best, but we can't hit
18 everybody.

19 But I appreciate that. And I appreciate you and
20 others joining and representing on that part of it.

21 And I think I saw a hand. Oh. Tom.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, Tom joined us again here.

23 Tom.

24 MR. PARTIN: Thank you very much. And I'll kind
25 of put on my hat where AFRC represents the counties. I

1 hear a lot of the discussions from the county folks when
2 we're at our forest meetings about the importance of
3 forest management and how that's impacting grazing, and I
4 just would like to reiterate that grazing is a natural
5 resource and needs some management much like timber, and,
6 obviously, grazing is one way to keep the heavier fuels
7 down.

8 But also what I'm hearing from the grazers is how
9 important some of these allotments are for many of the
10 folks that have ranches and operations in Montana and how
11 it plays in so well with their private lands and the
12 ability to graze and have an allotment on the national
13 forests. Many of these places are century-old farms, and
14 it's really become part of their lifestyle, and they have
15 a really strong connection.

16 But one of the issues impacting them specific to the
17 Helena-Lewis and Clark and also the B-D and, to some part,
18 the Custer Gallatin, really the eastern forests, is the
19 impact that a lot of this dead lodgepole has had on the
20 ability to maintain fences, the ability to have access in
21 to get to their grazing allotments, and really for the
22 access of the cattle to get and help reduce the forage
23 that's on the ground.

24 So as we think about a holistic approach to how we're
25 going to manage the Helena-Lewis and Clark on many fronts,

1 many of the natural resources, I think this is one of them
2 that we have to consider going forward and the important
3 role of the grazers in helping to accomplish some of these
4 results. So thank you.

5 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Tom. I appreciate it.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. Thank you, Tom.

7 Just turning to the list of participants here, maybe a
8 final call here, is there anyone else who is an objector
9 or interested person here who is just joining by phone
10 that wants to bring a comment or question forward to
11 Leanne?

12 Yeah. Rick, it looks like you've joined us again. Do
13 you want to jump in?

14 MR. KERR: Yeah. I just wanted to thank Leanne
15 and the Forest Service for holding some great meetings and
16 good participation. And Shawn, you do a good job as
17 facilitator. So thank you.

18 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, Rick. Appreciate it.
19 Thanks for taking time out of your busy days too.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, much appreciated, Rick.
21 Thank you for the comment.

22 And I don't see anyone else, Leanne.

23 MS. MARTEN: Okay. Well, how about if I just do
24 a quick summary of today, and then we'll turn it over to
25 Shawn to close out.

1 Does that work, Shawn?

2 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, that sounds good. Maybe a
3 summary of today and then just a note on next steps, and
4 then I'll be happy to close things out.

5 MS. MARTEN: Okay. I can do that.

6 So again, a really great day. And I know we have many
7 people that have been listening in that are not formal
8 objectors or listed as interested persons, but you're very
9 interested in the Helena-Lewis and Clark and what's
10 happening on the forest there and the Northern Region. So
11 thank you for all you folks out there on video and in
12 phone land that have just been participating over the last
13 several days and all day today because of your passion for
14 management of your public lands.

15 We started out the day talking about watershed
16 conservation districts and the network there, downstream
17 uses, you know, bull trout, some of just the interwoven
18 parts of riparian, and heard really clear just a lot of
19 passion about an importance of water to all our daily
20 lives, be it through irrigation, agricultural use,
21 municipalities, obviously for the vegetation, the
22 wildlife, and all the natural resources. And water is
23 fundamental to what we do, and it's fundamental to the
24 management of the National Forest System lands.

25 So heard a lot of different perspectives and a lot of

1 ask around really highlighting how important water is, and
2 not only just on the National Forest System lands but
3 downstream to our communities and to the public we serve
4 and irrigation districts and agricultural use, amongst
5 just many several of the other important aspects of water.

6 And, you know, as we moved into then talking just
7 vegetation and the timber side of the equation, and, of
8 course, it's all linked together, just like wildlife and
9 recreation and all the other topics we've hit over the
10 last three days. And really listening again to concerns
11 and perspectives around the need to manage the vegetation,
12 be it where we can commercially, and that's tied into the
13 health and diversity of our communities and the economies
14 and jobs. But it's all for the benefit of the resources.

15 And there's a lot of treatments we can do on the land
16 to benefit the watersheds, to benefit wildlife,
17 recreational use. There may be or may not be commercial
18 timber harvest, but it's important for fuels, wildfire,
19 and just our communities at risk from future wildfire.

20 Heard a lot about the dead timber on the Helena-Lewis
21 and Clark from beetle outbreaks and concerns on the future
22 and as we move into the future there across the forest as
23 well as in some special designated areas, and what we may
24 or may not be able to do and look at from that
25 perspective.

1 And really looking into the today and into the future
2 and trying to, on all aspects of the forest plan, make
3 sure we build in, as much as we can, the flexibility for
4 new, I'll say technology or new desired uses of the public
5 land. But on the flip side, make sure we aren't just --
6 and this ties into some what of we were just talking
7 about, we aren't just pushing everything down to a project
8 level and into the future and seemingly not addressing
9 needs. And that was part of the concern with the
10 livestock grazing and what's at the plan level versus at
11 the allotment site-specific levels, the timing, the
12 comprehensive look. Because you need that flexibility,
13 but there's a fine line between that.

14 And then also just in the interim, on any of these
15 resource managements, we heard it a couple different times
16 today on riparian management zones and the shifting of a
17 paradigm, if we're going to be shifting that and how that
18 ties into stream management zones with the state
19 perspectives and the different criteria for the two and
20 how they're defined. Similar terminology, but they have
21 different definitions. So how are we working across
22 jurisdictions? Because none of these natural resource
23 areas stop at a jurisdictional line, so how are we working
24 with our partners and how are we taking successes and
25 looking at that and building off of successes from that

1 perspective?

2 So, you know, today was a continuation of some great
3 dialogue, I thought, over the last three days. Very
4 helpful for me. I appreciate everybody's grace and
5 patience with the virtual platform.

6 And Shawn, thank you very much for outstanding
7 facilitation and helping us walk through, and Timory and
8 Cody and everybody behind the scenes with the technology.
9 And I know there's been a lot of behind-the-scenes helping
10 folks through the technology and some glitches there.

11 But more importantly, it really just helps me
12 formulate in my mind and get a better feel for what folks
13 are really seeing and what they were writing in their
14 objections, so as I work on my response to Forest
15 Supervisory Avey, I can take this into account. It gives
16 me much more perspective and context as I'm looking at the
17 whole compilation of objection issues that we received in
18 writing from that perspective.

19 We're going to be working on those, and the intent is
20 to have those over the fall. Once my response is issued
21 to Forest Supervisor Avey, you as objectors particularly
22 will receive notification, and it will be on the web, so
23 it will be open to the public, and you'll be able to see
24 my response to Forest Supervisor Avey at that time.

25 Very purposeful. Many of you are very interested,

1 it's come up a couple times today, on the Custer Gallatin.
2 And we have the objection review meetings for the
3 Custer Gallatin here in about a month. And we know that
4 there are some overlaps. We had some questions today on
5 why something is in the Helena-Lewis and Clark proposed
6 plan and it's different in the Custer Gallatin.

7 so that's also something that I just want to put on
8 the table, that we recognize that. We recognize the
9 unique ecosystems, we recognize the unique communities and
10 the public around the Helena-Lewis and Clark and the
11 Custer Gallatin. And we also recognize there is some
12 similarities and some overlap in some areas. So we're
13 working on that as we look through and go through the
14 planning process on two very large, dominant landscapes in
15 eastern Montana and the importance of them to all of you
16 and livelihoods across Montana.

17 so look forward to future dialogue. Look forward to
18 working through this. We had some questions, we'll do
19 some follow-up with a couple of you that I know were
20 asking for some references, and we'll get you those
21 references -- oops, my light just shut off -- references
22 and some of that, and we will go through from there.

23 So not because my light shut off, but I actually am
24 done, so I'll turn it back over to Shawn, and I will move
25 a little bit different so it will turn back on.

1 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Leanne. That was a
2 great summary of the day and of the process overall.

3 Just in closing, I want to echo the thanks to
4 everyone, to the participants who showed up and really
5 engaged in conversation. Thanks for all of the time that
6 you brought in over the last three days and throughout the
7 process. This is something that really does take
8 everyone's effort and deep thinking, and that includes a
9 lot of on-the-ground experience and different
10 perspectives. It takes everyone's voice in the process,
11 and so even though we would have all appreciated being in
12 person to have this conversation, it's nice to be able to
13 do it in this format. And thanks for engaging as
14 effectively as you did online. It was really useful.

15 Thanks to you, Leanne, for guiding us through the
16 conversation in a way that really listened to everyone's
17 voices and really focused on some key questions that
18 brought us beyond the objection letters. I thought you
19 did a nice job over the last three days really keying in
20 on those issues and not just building understanding but
21 trying to get at what it is that will help make a more
22 informed decision for the forest land as we move into the
23 future.

24 And Sara, thanks for being our liaison to the forest
25 and to the team that has done the work over the last

1 several years bringing the plan in front of all of us to
2 discuss and to really think about how do we make sure this
3 is the best plan that we can have as we move toward the
4 final decision.

5 Thanks to the folks behind the scenes, and I want to
6 give a special shout-out to everyone that did all the
7 planning to make this happen, Timory and Cody and your
8 team, and Deb, your team. There was so much that happened
9 to make sure today and the last couple of days came
10 together without a hitch. So thanks all around.

11 Looking like another beautiful fall day out there, so
12 I don't want to keep people from taking some recovered
13 time here that maybe we felt we were all going to be in
14 front of the screen. We'll call this some free time;
15 bonus time I think is what the kids call it in my class
16 when they get extra time.

17 With that, I'd just like to say a final word of thanks
18 and to stay tuned. And I know that Deb and her team and
19 Sara will be providing communication as these next steps
20 unfold. So thank you all, and enjoy the rest of the day,
21 and we'll stay in touch.

22 MS. MARTEN: Thanks, everyone. Have a great one.

23 MS. MAYBEN: Thanks, everyone. Thanks, Shawn.

24 * * * * *

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COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF MONTANA)
) SS.
COUNTY OF LEWIS AND CLARK)

I, CHERYL ROMSA, Court Reporter, residing in Helena, Montana, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were reported by me in shorthand and later transcribed into typewriting; and that the foregoing -472- pages constitute a true and accurate transcription of my stenotype notes of the proceedings.

DATED this 23rd of October, 2020.

/s/Cheryl A. Romsa
CHERYL A. ROMSA