AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

Agenda Item: Spruce Beetle Epidemic and Aspen Decline Managemen

Action Requested: Motion

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:

The attached draft was written by Commissioner Houck.

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: Katherine Haase **Submitter's Email Address:** khaase@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ◉ Required ○ Not Required

Comments:
ok db 7/24/15

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\dBaumgarten Discharge Date: 7/24/2015 Certificate of Insurance Required

Yes ○ No ◉

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\khaase Discharge Date: 7/24/2015

○ Consent Agenda ◉ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 5 minutes

Agenda Date: 7/28/2015

Revised April 2015

July 28, 2015

Scott Armentrout, Forest Supervisor
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison NF
Attn: SBEADMR
2250 Highway 50
Delta, Colorado 81416

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/SBEADMR_comments

SUBMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND CERTIFIED MAIL

Re: Draft EIS- Spruce Beetle Epidemic and Aspen Decline Management Response (SBEADMR)

Dear Mr. Armentrout,

Gunnison County appreciates the opportunity to provide formal comments and feedback on the Draft-EIS for the Spruce Beetle Epidemic and Aspen Decline Management Response (SBEADMR) Gunnison County has been actively involved in the Public Land Partnership (PLP) working group and thanks you for the opportunity and forum that has allowed county government, conservation groups and industry along with the forest service and other interested parties the opportunity to delve deeper into the complexities and the challenges in responding to these major events occurring across our treasured landscapes.

Based on our participation with the PLP working group and our review of the draft EIS please consider our comments and input in your decision making. Gunnison County has consistently looked for balance in the decisions and input we give to land use and public land management issues. We believe that natural resource development and resource protection can be balanced, especially when a wide variety of input is sought and included in final decisions. From there we can move forward with decisions that have strong buy in built upon consensus and forged through compromise.

Gunnison County supports Alternative 2- the Proposed Action. We feel that it allows the most opportunity while safeguarding important areas and species of concern. We value that public safety is a focus in both the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) as well as other areas that present high values in use, such as the protection of roads, utility corridors, communication sites, dispersed recreation sites, developed campgrounds, ski areas as well as other infrastructure. We also appreciate that certain areas are off limits to treatments and harvest and that the protection of Lynx habitat as well as other wildlife factors have been considered. Additionally, the protection of wetlands, wilderness, road less and steep slope areas are accounted for in the proposed action. Furthermore, the preferred option considers and addresses issues around fire concerns. As we all know, 120,000 acres (projected maximum combined treatments of the project) will not be enough to eliminate fire possibilities or be a huge game changer in the long term fire danger. With that in mind, we do believe that the proposed actions strategic treatments will allow firefighters a better opportunity to manage eventual fires for resource benefit.

The following is a list of thoughts on specific items or issues we feel can and should be considered in the final plan.

- Time is of the essence. We believe that due to the lifespan of dead/dying trees, the commercial treatment opportunities need to be developed and deployed as quickly as possible. We expect that all the necessary regulations be met, but know that the resource as a product does have a timeframe to its value.
- We encourage the project to work toward its goal of 120,000 acres of treatments. Of the 718,000 opportunity acres and in the scale of the whole GMUG this is a small percentage of the landscape but as stated above it provides opportunity for increased safety, protection of infrastructure and a potentially positive economic impact in our county.
- Although the 120,000 acres is proposed as 60,000 acres of commercial mechanical treatments and 60,000 acres of noncommercial mechanical and prescribed fire treatments, we would suggest that it is more important to use the best and most productive treatments as necessary and available. We support the cap of 120,000 acres but realize that adaptive management might suggest that the 50/50 split between commercial and noncommercial could actually lessen the overall impact of the project.
- The 300' buffers (600 feet total) might not be potentially large enough in some areas based on the fire behavior that was observed in the South Fork Complex Fires. While we understand that this buffer was chosen to coincide with travel management plans on the GMUG, we would ask that you utilize your expertise to determine if indeed these buffers are sufficient to be useful based on the unprecedented fire behavior exhibited on the GMUG in recent years.
- If noncommercial treatments produce viable firewood product that will be burned in slash piles we ask you consider the opportunity for community members to access and utilize this valuable resource. This would still require a forest service wood cutting permit but by mapping and allowing access to this product it creates revenue for the USFS and makes easier the collection of this resource in the local communities. We feel this is a good opportunity to allow better awareness of the stewardship and work taking place on our public lands and connect the communities to the issues of forest health.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft-EIS and the partnership we have with the GMUG. Although this is a time of great change on our landscape we also feel this is an opportunity for great change in how communities, counties, conservation groups and industry, along with the forest service, can be collaborative partners in stewardship and forest health over the course of time. Please feel free to contact the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners for any clarification of these comments or for further discussion.

Best Regards,

Paula Swenson	Phil Chamberland	Jonathan Houck
Chairperson	Commissioner	Commissioner