

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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Bruce Ramsey, Supervisor
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
420 Barrett Street
Dillon, MT 59725-3572

Dear Supervisor Ramsey:

A short while ago, several timber companies and conservation organizations held a number of meetings, poured over maps, came to agreement, and released the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership Agreement outlining a comprehensive strategy for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. I recently met with the "Partners" to review their agreement, and was impressed with their collaborative efforts. The end product is a public land plan for a working forest that sustains not only the economy and livelihood of the area, but also the world class fishing, hunting and recreational opportunities that now abound. I understand that you are in the final stages of adopting a new forest plan for this area, and urge the Forest Service to fully evaluate the Partnership proposal for forest management.

The debate over forest management and wilderness designation has spanned decades, and I need not describe to you how divisive resource issues in Montana can be. In light of this history, the fact that timber companies and conservation organizations could come together and produce a strategy for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest is truly remarkable. Their collective call for restoration forestry is a number one objective of this B-D plan, and compliments my administration's work to build on collaboration and further a restoration ethic. Their careful balancing of wilderness designations, a suitable timber base and outdoor recreation deserves careful consideration.

