



August 31, 2026

Dear District Ranger Feiger:

The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative (KFSC) is pleased to provide this letter of support for the **Flat Tail Project on the Cabinet Ranger District of the Kootenai National Forest**. KFSC supports the project's integrated approach to improving forest health and resilience, reducing hazardous fuels, providing sustainable forest products, and supporting the economy and communities of Sanders County.

The Flat Tail Project encompasses approximately 3,699 acres southeast of Trout Creek between Big Beaver Creek Road and White Pine Creek Road, including areas near Larch Point, Set Creek, Larch Creek, and Basin Creek. Importantly, the project boundary interacts with private properties in the White Pine and Beaver Creek communities. This location makes proactive forest and fuels management particularly important to KFSC and the communities we represent.

KFSC is a diverse collaborative that brings together representatives and interests from the timber industry, conservation, recreation, wildlife, local government, businesses, community organizations, and members of the public. Our work is centered on finding common ground and supporting responsible, science-based management of the Kootenai National Forest.

Forest Health and Resilience

KFSC strongly supports the project's goal of improving forest health and resilience through active stand management. The Environmental Assessment identifies current forest conditions that differ from desired conditions and notes susceptibility to insects, disease, drought, and wildfire. Existing concerns include root diseases, bark beetles, and larch dwarf mistletoe.

The proposed treatments would favor species such as western larch, western white pine, and ponderosa pine; create greater diversity in age and size classes; reduce stand density; and provide additional growing space for remaining trees. KFSC believes these actions are important investments in the long-term health and productivity of the Kootenai National Forest.

The project proposes approximately **903 acres of commercial harvest**, consisting of 626 acres of regeneration harvest and 277 acres of intermediate harvest. It also proposes approximately **548 acres of non-commercial treatments**, including thinning for fuels reduction, roadside thinning, underburning, and pre-commercial thinning.

Wildfire Risk Reduction and Community Protection

KFSC particularly supports the Flat Tail Project's emphasis on reducing hazardous fuels and improving opportunities for safe and effective wildfire response. The Forest Service identifies dead and dying trees, high tree densities, and accumulated fuels as conditions that can contribute to severe fire behavior and limit firefighters' ability to safely respond.

This is especially significant given the project's proximity to White Pine, Beaver Creek, Trout Creek, private lands, and the Highway 200 corridor. The EA describes Flat Tail as a landscape-level hazardous-fuels project intended to reduce the threat of large-scale wildfire to communities and infrastructure. The analysis also recognizes the potential for a large wildfire within the project area to directly affect Trout Creek.

KFSC supports the combination of commercial treatments and subsequent fuels work, including slash treatment and underburning, as well as non-commercial fuels reduction. We also support the proposed roadside thinning intended to reinforce Forest System Road 2253 as a potential holding feature for future wildfire suppression.

Sustainable Timber Supply and Rural Economy

KFSC strongly recognizes the connection between active forest management and the economic health of northwest Montana. The Environmental Assessment identifies contributing to a sustainable supply of timber products and the local economy as one of the primary purposes of the Flat Tail Project.

The Forest Service notes that the project area contains productive forest lands and commercial-sized timber and that commercial timber sales provide a cost-effective means of accomplishing project objectives while supplying forest products.

The proposed **903 acres of commercial harvest** can provide important forest products while supporting local loggers, truck drivers, equipment operators, contractors, mills, and other businesses associated with the forest-products industry.

Maintaining this local workforce and infrastructure is also essential to the Forest Service's long-term ability to accomplish vegetation management, restoration, and hazardous-fuels reduction. A viable forest-products industry and a healthy, resilient National Forest are closely connected in communities such as ours.

Transportation, Access, and Watershed Protection

KFSC recognizes that safe and functional access is necessary to accomplish the proposed treatments. Flat Tail includes approximately **18 miles of haul-road reconstruction and maintenance and 1.5 miles of new permanent system road**. The new road would be gated year-round for administrative use, and the EA states that public access would not change as a result of the project.

We support the use of Best Management Practices and project design features to minimize erosion and sediment delivery and protect water resources while providing the access necessary to complete forest management activities. The EA states that the new road would incorporate drainage structures and other BMPs to minimize watershed impacts.

KFSC also appreciates the consideration given to aquatic resources. Westslope cutthroat trout occur in Big Beaver Creek and White Pine Creek, while bull trout may be present seasonally within or downstream of portions of the project area. The proposed action keeps timber harvest and pre-commercial thinning outside Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas and incorporates BMPs for road maintenance and construction.

Collaborative, Landscape-Scale Management

The Flat Tail Project demonstrates the importance of considering forest health, wildfire risk, wildlife and aquatic habitat, watersheds, recreation, timber production, and rural economic stability together rather than as separate management objectives.

KFSC appreciates that public outreach on the project began in 2024 and included nearby landowners, local, state, and federal agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties. Continued communication with local communities and stakeholders will be important as the project moves toward implementation.

KFSC **supports implementation of the Flat Tail Project** and believes the proposed combination of commercial and non-commercial vegetation treatments, fuels reduction, prescribed fire, and associated transportation work represents an important investment in the long-term resilience of this landscape.

We appreciate the Cabinet Ranger District and Kootenai National Forest staff for their work developing this project and for continuing to engage stakeholders in management of our National Forest.

KFSC looks forward to continuing to work with the Forest Service and our partners to advance collaborative management that supports **healthy and resilient forests, reduced wildfire risk, functioning watersheds and wildlife habitat, sustainable forest products, recreational opportunities, and strong rural communities.**

Sincerely,

**Shawn Morgan – Cabinet RD Team Co-Chair
Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative (KFSC)**