



File Code: 2670
Date: March 17, 2017

Jodi Bush
Field Supervisor, Ecological Services
USDI-Fish and Wildlife Service
585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59901

Dear Ms. Bush,

The Forest Service is proposing to revise the Flathead forest plan to comply with the 2012 planning rule. The Flathead's revised plan is being prepared in conjunction with amendments to incorporate management direction for grizzly bear habitat on National Forest System lands in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). In accordance with the consultation agreement completed on August 2, 2016, we have worked cooperatively with your staff in Kalispell and Helena. As agreed, two biological assessments are being submitted (one for the NCDE grizzly bear amendments and one for the Flathead National Forest's revised forest plan), each covering terrestrial wildlife species, aquatic species, plant species, and designated critical habitats. Enclosed is the biological assessment to initiate formal consultation for the Revised Flathead National Forest Plan under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

As described in the enclosed biological assessment, the proposed action *may affect, is likely to adversely affect* Canada lynx and designated Canada lynx critical habitat. The proposed action *may affect, is likely to adversely affect* grizzly bear. The proposed action *may affect, is likely to adversely affect* bull trout and designated bull trout critical habitat. The proposed action *may affect, is not likely to adversely affect* water howellia. The proposed action will have *no effect* on the meltwater stonefly or Spalding's catchfly. I am also requesting concurrence with the biological assessment determination that the proposed action *may affect, is not likely to jeopardize* the North American wolverine.

I appreciate the excellent support and assistance provided by your staff throughout the informal consultation process. Communication among the Level 1 team has been very productive and will continue. If you have any questions about this biological assessment, please contact Reed Kuennen (406-758-5256), Pat Van Eimeren (406-387-3863) or Heidi Trechsel (406-758-5310).

Sincerely,

CHIP WEBER
Forest Supervisor

cc: Reed Kuennen, Pat Van Eimeren, Heidi Trechsel

