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**File Code:** 1900; 2600  
**Date:** March 13, 2017

Jodi Bush  
Field Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Montana Ecological Services Field Office  
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1  
Helena, MT 59601-6287

Dear Ms. Bush,

The Forest Service is proposing to amend the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo forest plans 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 to develop the proposed forest plan amendments concurrent with the revision of the Flathead National Forest plan. 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 amendment forests under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The biological assessment for the Flathead's revised forest plan is being finalized and will be submitted soon.

As described in the enclosed biological assessment, the proposed action will have *no effect* on the western distinct population segment (DPS) of the yellow-billed cuckoo, the Kootenai River white sturgeon, Spalding's campion, and water howellia. The proposed action *may affect, is not likely to adversely affect* the conterminous U.S. DPS of Canada lynx, Canada lynx critical habitat, bull trout and bull trout critical habitat. The proposed action *may affect, is likely to adversely affect* the grizzly bear. 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 Nancy Warren (303-514-4402), Reed Kuennen (406-758-5256), Pat Van Eimeren (406-387-3863) or Heidi Trechsel (406-758-5310).

Sincerely,



*CHIP WEBER*  
*Forest Supervisor*

Enclosure: Biological Assessment

cc: Bill Avey, Helena-Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor  
Christopher Savage, Kootenai Forest Supervisor  
Tim Garcia, Lolo Forest Supervisor  
Joe Krueger, Planning Team Leader