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**File Code:** 1920  
**Date:** February 19, 2021

Dear Objectors and Interested Persons,

This is my response to the objections filed on the draft record of decision for the revised Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest Land Management Plan prepared by Forest Supervisor William Avey.

The draft record of decision, land management plan, and associated environmental documents were published on May 21, 2020, initiating a 60-day objection filing period. Eighty-eight eligible objectors filed timely objections. One organization withdrew their objection. Comments received from 58 individuals that did not meet the objection filing requirements were forwarded to the Forest Supervisor for consideration in making the final decision. I also received requests to participate in the resolution meetings from 29 eligible interested persons. All eligible objectors and interested persons will receive notification of my response. The response and all plan documentation can be found via links on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest website at: [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/hlc/forestplanrevision](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/hlc/forestplanrevision).

I conducted my objection review in accordance with the pre-decisional administrative review process described in the Code of Federal Regulations at 36 CFR 219 subpart B. The intent of this step is to allow interested individuals and organizations an opportunity for an independent review and to resolve issues before plan approval.

After an initial review of the objections, I held just over 3 days of resolution meetings with objectors and interested persons to discuss a subset of the issues and explore opportunities for reasonable solutions to conflicting views. The meetings focused on nine topic areas including broad wildlife concerns, elk habitat management, identification of species of conservation concern, motorized and mechanized access, the areas recommended for wilderness designation, other designated area management, aquatic resources, timber harvest and reforestation, and livestock grazing.

The discussions at the meetings helped me fully understand the issues and remedies suggested by some of the objectors from their differing perspectives. I appreciate the time offered by all the participants, and the willingness to have open, candid discussions. I encourage the objectors, interested persons, and the responsible officials to continue to engage with each other during implementation of the revised plan.

The objections covered a broad range of resource management and public use concerns and many were similar enough to consolidate under topic areas. The planning regulations require a written response to the objections that sets forth the reasons for my response; however, this response need not be point by point. Therefore, all objections have been consolidated into one set of issues.



This response is the outcome of a deliberative and extensive review of concerns raised by objectors involving complex regulatory and management issues. My response reflects my findings from review of the planning record, the objections, the discussions with objectors and interested persons at the resolution meetings; and follow up discussions with the responsible official in the context of law, regulation, and policy. Although some issues raised in the objections are not specifically cited in my response, all objectors' concerns have been considered.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the Forest's planning effort over the last several years. If you have questions concerning the processing of your objection, please contact the regional planner, Timory Peel at [timory.peel@usda.gov](mailto:timory.peel@usda.gov).

This letter and enclosed attachment document the completion of my objection review. Once my instructions have been addressed, Forest Supervisor Avey will sign the record of decision approving the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest Land Management Plan. This written response is the final decision for all objections to the revised plan and is not subject to further administrative review by the Forest Service or the Department of Agriculture.

Objections regarding the identification of species of conservation concern were forwarded to the Chief of the Forest Service for review. The response from her delegated representative can be found on the Northern Region's website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r1/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fseprd500402>.

Sincerely,

LEANNE M. MARTEN  
Regional Forester

cc: William Avey, Julie Schaefer