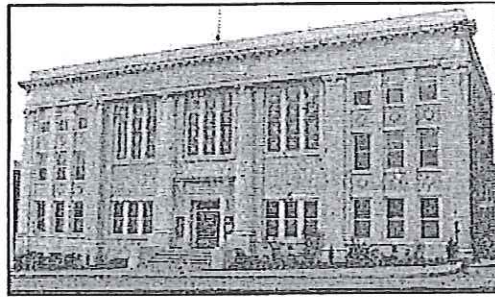


Board of
County Commissioners
245-2234

Clerk District Court
Auditor and Recorder
245-3212

Treasurer and
Tax Collector
245-2421



Prosecuting Attorney
245-2564

Assessor
245-2821

Sheriff
245-2555

Coroner
245-2611

County of Benewah
701 W. College Avenue
St. Maries, Idaho 83861

March 1, 2018

St. Joe Ranger District
222 South 7th Street, Suite 1
St. Maries, ID 83861

Attn: St. Joe Ranger District Planning Staff

RE: Brebner Flat Project

Greetings:

Thank you for sending us the information package for the above referenced proposed vegetation management project.

As we have stated in the past, we are very concerned about forest health in the St. Joe Ranger District. Insects and disease are taking a heavy toll on susceptible tree species, consequently fuel loading is increasing and fire hazard as well. Forest management practices are needed to remedy the situation, and it appears your proposed project will take some much needed steps in that direction. We support and encourage the Forest Service to fully utilize the maximum harvestable acres as allowed under the CE authority. If additional acres for treatment can be identified beyond the 1,948 acres in the proposed plan, we fully support those acres being included in the Brebner Flat project.

Another issue we are concerned about is timber supply to provide jobs and economic support for our local industries and communities. We anticipate this project will make a substantial contribution in that regard.

The project includes a modest amount of road work, including reopening/reconstruction of existing roads that have been closed and not maintained, and a few small new construction segments. As usual, we are interested in roads being kept usable following the project for initial attack of wildfires, although they might be gated and closed to public use at sensitive times. Also, we would like to see some roads remain open at times for firewood and various recreational purposes.

At the Shoshone - Benewah Forest Health Collaborative meeting on February 28th, there was discussion about elk security. Apparently, this project is considered to be encroaching a bit on elk security. Please keep in mind that the St. Joe watershed is well over 1,000,000 acres of federal, state and private lands and that this project has less than 12,000 acres with approximately 250 acres of designated wildlife security area. We feel that a minor encroachment is acceptable. Moreover, the trade-off benefit of reducing fuel loading, breaking up the continuity of the fuel, reducing the number of trees susceptible to insects and disease, and restoring resilient tree species to the site will result in a clear net benefit. Conversely, the stand in its current and trending condition is highly susceptible to severe and extensive wildfire, which likely would cause far greater disturbance to the habitat than a few small harvest units.

As indicated in the project scoping notice, the silvicultural issues being addressed are not just local, but are widespread in the IPNF. We hope you will be able to vigorously pursue additional projects in the immediate future.

Thank you,
Benewah County Board of Commissioners



Deanna Bramblett, Clerk