October 11, 2019

TO: The Honorable Senator Steve Daines  
The Honorable Senator Jon Tester  
The Honorable Congressman Greg Gianforte

RE: Increasing Forest Service Workforce Capacity

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) recently released a report titled *Sustaining the Forest Service, Increasing Workforce Capacity*. The report details can be found at this link: [https://www.nafsr.org/advocacy/2019/072619%20Workforce%20Capacity%20Study.pdf](https://www.nafsr.org/advocacy/2019/072619%20Workforce%20Capacity%20Study.pdf)

The Montana Coalition of Forest Counties (Coalition) respectfully requests that you urge your colleagues to increase funding for the USDA Forest Service and enable the Agency to address its workplace capacity needs. Increasing the agency’s financial capacity is the only way the Forest Service will be able to fulfill the public’s demands to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration.

In writing this report NAFSR interviewed agency employees across the nation. The key finding: The Forest Service is struggling to meet its management responsibilities because it does not have the necessary staff, especially resource specialists like foresters and biologists, required to perform the work.

NAFSR has presented their findings to the very highest levels of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, and President Trump. The Coalition works closely with Region 1 and our member counties are actively engaged with National Forest management in our respective local jurisdictions. The Coalition recognizes how the lack of capacity negatively impacts the agency and prevents it from achieving its management goals.

The Montana Coalition of Forest Counties reviewed, and unanimously supported, the NAFSR report at our September 23, 2019 meeting. The Coalition believes if the Forest Service is to successfully fulfill its mission to increase the pace and scale of restoration on National Forest lands, and address the multitude of other needs that fall under multiple use management, it is essential that Congress appropriate more funds to the Agency.

National Forest lands are a significant part of Montana’s heritage and important to our future. National Forests support our Montana way of life in many ways – from lifestyles to livelihoods. These lands are a critical component of Montana’s economy, including timber, mining, grazing, and outdoor recreation. The USDA Forest Service is in need of sound financial investment to ensure our public lands are properly managed for today and into the future.

Respectfully,

*Greg Chilcott*

Greg Chilcott, Chairman
Montana Coalition of Forest Counties