



Forest Service

Region One

Northern Region
26 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

File Code: 1560

Date: DEC 01 2017

Route To:

Subject: 2017 Post Fire Response Incident Management Team Letter to MT State Legislators

To: Honorable Montana State Legislator

During the 2017 wildland fire season, Montana experienced widespread wildfires that burned more than 1.25 million acres, requiring sustained engagement by local, state, Tribal and federal firefighters for an unprecedented amount of time. Our engagement continues with post-fire response and recovery, and I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on our efforts.

Due to the number, size and severity of the fires this year, we established a regional post-fire response incident management team to prioritize response efforts around employee and public safety, provide regional coordination of resources and work, and provide a consistent approach to emergency response efforts and salvage harvest. Specialists have been brought in from across the country to expedite this work, and we are contracting with local businesses wherever possible to implement measures on the ground.

In addition, we are using technology, such as high-resolution drone imagery and computerized filtering, to accelerate our planning efforts, reduce exposure of employees to hazardous conditions, and rapidly zero in on the areas of highest priority. We are making every effort to find the right balance that minimizes environmental concerns, while also recovering economic value through salvage harvest where appropriate to support local communities. We have had numerous conversations with representatives from the timber industry to appropriately scale our efforts in the right locations, and have also met with conservation groups, citizens, state and federal agencies, and elected officials. Assessments are simultaneously being conducted for reforestation needs to ensure the health and productivity of these areas are restored.

The team's work will compliment required environmental analyses and the public involvement process. Decision-making authority is retained at the local level on project specifics.

I encourage you to visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r1/landmanagement/?cid=fseprd564805> for the latest information about our work. I also encourage you to contact your local Forest Supervisor and District Rangers to find out more about local post-fire recovery efforts in your area.


LEANNE M. MARTEN
Regional Forester



America's Working Forests – Caring Every Day in Every Way

Printed on Recycled Paper

