



File Code: 1950; 1570
Date: January 17, 2017

Dear Interested Party:

I am withdrawing my May 15, 2015, Record of Decisions (RODs) for the Greater Red Lodge Vegetation and Habitat Management and Nichols Creek Road Reconstruction on the Beartooth Ranger District, Custer Gallatin National Forest. The project area encompassed roughly 21,871 acres in the Red Lodge Creek area near Luther, and the Willow-Nichols Creek area along West Fork Rock Creek Road south of Red Lodge Mountain.

The Forest Service has been unable to implement the activities due to litigation centered around our analysis of lynx habitat, recent court decisions, and new information. Because the RODs have been withdrawn, no on-the-ground action may be undertaken in order to implement either the Greater Red Lodge Vegetation and Habitat Management or the Nichols Creek Road activities. We continue to be concerned about large stand-replacing, high intensity wildfires on the Beartooth Front, and will continue to evaluate this area in particular. But the Forest Service will not take any on-the-ground action to implement activities unless the agency makes a new decision under the National Environmental Policy Act, addressing and incorporating any other analyses that may be legally required, including consultation under the Endangered Species Act. Any future action regarding the project will be consistent with the best available science on lynx critical habitat and the Forest Service's commitment to ensure the protection of such habitat. Any new decision will be subject to all applicable administrative processes, including public involvement, as well as judicial review.

If you have questions about the withdrawal of this decision, please contact District Ranger Ken Coffin at (406) 446-2103.

Sincerely,

MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor

