



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**REGION 8**

1595 Wynkoop Street  
Denver, CO 80202-1129  
Phone 800-227-8917  
[www.epa.gov/region08](http://www.epa.gov/region08)

**November 22, 2021**

Ref: 8ORA-N

Bill Avey, Forest Supervisor  
Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest  
2880 Skyway Dr.  
Helena, Montana 59602

Dear Forest Supervisor Avey:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 has reviewed the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (HLCNF) 2021 Land Management Plan and signed Record of Decision (ROD) for the Project (CEQ No. 20210158) pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Helena and the Lewis and Clark National Forests were consolidated on December 11, 2015. This current planning effort proposes to revise the 1986 land and resource management plans for the HLCNF in compliance with the 2012 Planning Rule. The HLCNF planning area in the Rocky Mountains of central Montana includes approximately 2,846,606 acres of USFS land within its administrative boundaries. The planning area also includes approximately 30,973 acres of USFS land on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF that is guided by the HLCNF plan and about 2,308 acres of USFS lands that exist as isolated parcels outside of the administrative boundaries. The Final EIS contains the analysis of six alternatives developed for the programmatic management of the HLCNF and has identified Alternative F as the Preferred Alternative.

The EPA submitted a Draft EIS comment letter to the HLCNF on September 6, 2018. In the Final EIS the HLCNF included responses to comments made during the Draft EIS public notice period. We appreciate the HLCNF responding to our comments and including the requested information regarding the Montana 2018 303(d) list and prepared TMDLs. The additional details added to the Final EIS helps facilitate informed decision making and public disclosure.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this Final EIS. If you have any questions or if further discussion is needed, please contact me at (303) 312-6704, or the lead reviewer of this project, Shannon Snyder, at (303) 312-6335 or [snyder.shannon@epa.gov](mailto:snyder.shannon@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. Strobel".

Philip S. Strobel  
NEPA Branch Chief  
Office of the Regional Administrator