



P.O. Box 841
Seeley Lake, MT 59868

June 18, 2010

Leslie Weldon, Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service Northern Region
PO Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807-7669

RE: Southwestern Crown of the Continent (SW Crown) proposal for Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) funding.

Alpine Artisans, Inc. Board of Directors are writing in support of the SW Crown proposal for CFLRP funding. Alpine Artisans is a group of professional artists and supporters residing and working in the Swan Valley, Clearwater and Blackfoot watersheds—the very area affected by this proposal. We as artists value the beauty and remoteness of this special area. We see the effect of insect and disease on our forests and the danger of catastrophic wildfire as a result of the dead and dying forest, and are very concerned.

We also see the effect of declining logging jobs, loss of mills to process the wood, and general decline of the Montana economy. This affects us as working artists, as there is less money in the local economy to support our art work and programs that we produce.

In addition to the working visual artists in our group, we also have a program called 2 Valleys Stage, which brings professional performing groups to our rural schools to enhance the education of our youth in music and the performing arts. Money for this very expensive program is raised locally and through grants. With the decline in the economy, we are finding it difficult to raise the necessary funds to continue the breadth and length of this wonderful program.

We are excited about the possibility of the SW Crown project to clean up our forests, control insects and disease, prevent the spread of noxious weeds, protect water quality, improve habitat for fish and wildlife, and maintain our forest-based economy. If funded, the SW Crown proposal will enable our national forest managers and community partners, such as ourselves, to make significant progress toward achieving these goals. Unlike many places in the West, we have thus far retained our local infrastructure. Our workforce includes experienced logging contractors, heavy equipment operators, log truck drivers, and foresters. The local timber mill at Seeley Lake is still in business and processing logs, and is progressively exploring the use of biomass to generate electricity for the community. The 10-year time frame of the SW Crown proposal will keep our loggers and our mill in business for that time and into the future. In other words, our communities are “shovel ready” to go on this project!

Alpine Artisans, Inc. encourages your support of this nomination.

Sincerely,

Merrily Dunham
President
Alpine Artisans, Inc.

Cc: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
The Honorable Tom Tidwell, Chief of the Forest Service
Mr. William Timko, Director of Forest Management Staff