USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Teton Basin Ranger District | [address redacted] 33 Ste 100 [address redacted] [address redacted] [phone redacted]

File Code: 1560/5460
Date: October 20, 2026

Teton County Planning and Zoning
150 Courthouse Drive
Driggs, ID 83422

Dear P and Z:

This letter is in response to a public hearing for a development known as Gallery Subdivision. If you have any questions, please let me know.

I have consulted the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the direction on how we're expected to manage the National Forest System land adjacent to this proposed development under a 5.1.3(b) prescription that places emphasis on wood-fiber production and other compatible commodity outputs while managing vegetation and fuels to minimize fire risk for the wildland urban interface.

Fire: Since the property is adjacent to the National Forest, I requested that the subdivision be constructed firewise by removing flammable vegetation from around the buildings and using fire resistant construction material where possible. I'm sure the fire department will provide the details for a firewise subdivision. It is appropriate to require implementation and maintenance of firewise vegetation management before any lots are sold.

The prevailing winds would typically drive a fire from the Forest into the subdivision. Wildland firefighters and county resources would be expected to protect the homes. Without firewise planning and implementation, this is not a safe situation for firefighters; proper ingress & egress routes, safety zones and strategic fuel breaks are needed to ensure that firefighters will have adequate access and a safe place to go if a fire were to become too dangerous to stay in place. By requiring firewise planning, construction & maintenance, fire suppression & protection costs that would otherwise be passed on to the taxpayer should be minimized.

In addition, there is a hazard of fire coming from the subdivision or below it burning uphill onto the forest. Research has shown that the most effective measures to protect homes from wildfire occurs within 300 feet of the home.

Wildlife: This subdivision is being proposed in a previously unoccupied area. It therefore can have significant effects to wildlife in addition to increasing recreational use of the National Forest. I'm sure the Idaho Fish and Game is concerned about wildlife in the area so will try to stay with issues directly affecting the National Forest and defer to their comments.

Administrative Access: We recognize the steep terrain along much of the Forest Boundary but we still request administrative access to the National Forest for agency personnel and our contractors for the purpose of inspection, fire suppression, general administration and potential vegetation manipulation (vegetation removal to reduce fire risks) in appropriate locations spread out along the Gallery subdivision/Forest boundary. This administrative access could be used for the removal of Forest products (large equipment) along the subdivision in order to reduce fuel loading and reduce hazards as outlined in

the Forest Plan. We would be interested in further conversations with the developer on accommodating this request.

Public Forest Access: The north end of the subdivision contains the Grove Creek Road that provides public access to the Grove Creek area on NFS lands. The Forest relies on prescriptive county access to retain public access. We recommend a better legal document/easement to retain and describe this easement into the future. We also recognize that if this road is improved, it will greatly increase public access and pressure into the Grove Creek drainage and potentially cause parking issues (summer/winter) along this access. We recommend that the applicant meet with the Forest and user groups to discuss potential ways to design the development in a manner that can accommodate or facilitate public access in a manner that minimizes issues for future Gallery subdivision lot owners.

There is currently no public access from the private property onto the National Forest. When a subdivision borders the National Forest homeowners often create user created routes out their back doors onto the National Forest. While I encourage hiking and riding on the National Forest, it is a violation of 36 CFR 261.10a to construct or maintain any kind of road or trail on the National Forest without authorization. There are designated routes in the area that can be used for these activities. I do not feel that there needs to be public access onto the National Forest from this proposed development if something similar to the following request is included and successfully implemented in the final CCR's for the subdivision.

> **Trails:** Any new trails from the PUD to the surrounding public lands are subject to permit and approval of the USFS. Any informal, unpermitted trails from the PUD onto the Forest Service Lands are prohibited. The boundary of the PUD will be actively monitored by the Daniel Highland PUD on a yearly basis. If unpermitted trails are identified, with the oversight of the USFS, the Daniel Highland PUD will close and revegetate these trails.

Please keep me informed and involved in the development of this project. I wish I could help make your deliberation and decision easier. If you need additional information, clarification or have questions please contact me.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by JAY PENCE
Date: 2026.10.20 10:50:07 -06'00'

JAY PENCE
District Ranger