

For Immediate Release:

**Forest Products Companies Applaud Final Listing Determination from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Black-Backed Woodpecker**

Rapid City, SD – October 4, 2017

The Black Hills Forest Resource Association (BHFRA) and their members applaud the final determination by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), published in the October 5 Federal Register, to not list the Black Hills population of black-backed woodpecker under the Endangered Species Act. That determination was in response to a petition filed by out-of-state groups to list the species as “endangered” under the Act. Further, the BHFRA appreciates the time invested by FWS staff in South Dakota and elsewhere to reach a scientifically sound conclusion.

According to Ben Wudtke, Forest Programs Manager for Black Hills Forest Resource Association, “This decision by the FWS affirms that the broad population of this species of woodpecker is not threatened by forest management actions in the Black Hills.” At the core of the petition were unfounded allegations against the Forest Service of “pervasive salvage logging”, extensive clearcutting, and providing “absolutely no regulatory protection” for woodpecker habitat. Wudtke said he is thankful that the FWS did an extensive review to find the facts, soliciting information from the States of SD and WY, and other interested parties.

This species of woodpecker thrives in areas of tree mortality, particularly in burned areas. The petitioners previously suggested the majority of the Black Hills National Forest should burn at high severity to meet the habitat needs of the black-backed woodpecker. Wudtke said, listing this species under the Endangered Species Act would further undermine the broader efforts to manage the forests of the Black Hills to increase health and resiliency to catastrophic disturbances. Wudtke said, “We all want healthy forests for today and the future, and burning them down, to the detriment of other species and uses, is not a sensible option.”

Forest products companies in the Black Hills directly employ more than 1400 people and pay more than \$120 million in salaries and contractor payments annually. Forest products companies in the Black Hills continue to work with all land ownerships to reduce the risk of future mountain pine beetle epidemics and devastating effects of catastrophic wildfires.

Contact:

Ben Wudtke, Forest Programs Manager, Black Hills Forest Resource Association, 605-341-0875 or [bwudtke@hills.net](mailto:bwudtke@hills.net)

###