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First name: Tamara

Last name: Twitchell

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Alternative D is the best alternative because it includes the fewest restrictions on resource use. This alternative would emphasize increased motorized forest access and developed recreation opportunities and permitted in backcountry recreation areas. Management areas would emphasize increased roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure. In the past, the Forest Service has intentionally blocked roads with downed timber to prevent usage of established trails and roads. A classic example is the access to the Carter Military Road. The Forest Service used a machine that cut the lodgepole pine off at the base. The trees were left on the trail and not cleaned up for several years.

Under Alternative D there would be no recommended wilderness areas. The Forest Service use of Roadless areas has created an essence of wilderness areas.

Alternative D encourages use of a full range of fire suppression strategies and tactics. It does not take a specialist to drive up US-191 from Vernal to Dutch John to see the differences in management strategies. Clear cut areas have had healthy regrowth and the thinning of these growths have added tremendous value to the lumber companies that are seeking to harvest the trees. Other areas that have not been allowed to harvest have fallen trees that are sometimes 3 trees deep. It is impossible to walk through. Past practices by the Ashley National Forest have all but bankrupted local timber companies and those companies relying on the harvest of these trees (i.e., pallet mill in Manila). The mismanagement of the forest has allowed for a situation that a Forest Fire is more likely to happen. Because of the access situation, the fire will only be fought by air because it is impossible to access the area by truck. More attention needs to be made to the effect the prescribed burns have on the local economy, especially during the hunting seasons. The prescribed burns often have a direct impact on recreational users that want to have the fresh air and clear vistas when the whole area is on fire and very smoky. It also leaves the area with burn scars and unfavorable walking conditions for a couple of years.

Alternative D includes varieties of endangered species but needs to address noxious weeds. Thistle is one of the worst. There should be something in the plan that mandates all Forest Service facilities be noxious weed free. Often going into campgrounds, it has been hard to get to restrooms because the thistle is over 3 feet high and not cleared out of the pathway. So far, the main way the Forest Service is managing the noxious weeds is by allowing cattle grazing in the area. While this helps with the main forest, it does not help the areas where recreational users are congregated, and cattle restricted.

I am an ATV, Snowmobiler, hiker, hunter, fisherman and nature lover. I have seen the devastation that forest fires have created in our area. It is hard to be told that the Forest Service is planning on allowing our forest to burn because of all the beetle-killed trees and lack of timbering in our area. They are continuously burning around us every fall. This is not good for our health and definitely not a reason we want to live and recreate here.