



208.345.6933 • PO Box 844, Boise, ID 83702 • www.idahoconservation.org

March 17, 2025

Jonathan Leblanc
District Ranger, North Fork Ranger District
PO Box 180
North Fork, ID 83467

Re: Deep Rabbit Fuel Break Project Scoping Comments

Dear Mr. Leblanc:

Thank you for considering our scoping comments on the proposed Deep Rabbit Fuel Break Project on the Salmon-Challis National Forest.

Since 1973, the Idaho Conservation League has been Idaho's voice for clean water, clean air, and public lands—values that are the foundation for Idaho's extraordinary quality of life. ICL works to protect these values through public education, outreach, advocacy, and policy development. As Idaho's largest state-based conservation organization, we represent over 25,000 supporters, many of whom have a deep personal interest in ensuring that our public lands and wildlife are protected.

This project intends to create linear fire breaks between the Moose Fire scar and Red Rock Fire scar with treatments up to 1,000 feet in width. ICL appreciates the Forest Service's desire to create fuel breaks, provide safe ingress and egress, and protect communities from wildfire. Given the recent large wildfires near the town of Salmon, this project proposal is timely and important to protect that community and its municipal watershed.

The Forest Service should describe why these specific locations were chosen for these fuel breaks. If available, wildfire models could be used to support the decision to create fuel breaks in these areas. Without some sort of supporting information, science, or fire modeling, it is difficult to comment on the choice of these locations.

We appreciate that no treatments will occur within RHCA's. We recommend utilizing native vegetation as a surface cover in fuel breaks to the maximum extent practicable. The Forest Service should examine if "feathering" the outer edge of the fuel break can help minimize visual effects, provide some short stringers of habitat for wildlife connectivity, minimize increased predation along straight edges and still accomplish the purpose and need.

These fuel breaks should be managed to minimize the spread of invasive weeds. To mitigate for this, the Forest Service should do additional proactive work to reduce weeds within treatment areas, such as restoring native forbs and bunch grasses and removing non-native annual grasses. This way, when a wildfire burns through, there is a higher likelihood of successful restoration.

Fuel breaks are going to have to be maintained in perpetuity. The Forest Service should ensure that the commitment and funding exist to maintain its constructed fuel breaks into the future.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments and ask that you please send us subsequent documents for this project. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Josh Johnson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Josh Johnson
Central Idaho Director
Idaho Conservation League
jjohnson@idahoconservation.org
(208) 345-6933 x 301