

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/20/2018 11:00:00 AM

First name: Sharon

Last name: Lamar

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Sandy Mack/Rachel Feigley

Re: Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration & WUI Project

Date: December 20, 2018

As a resident of Swan Valley for over 40 years, I applaud the effort by the Forest Service to conduct restoration projects on a landscape scale over a 20-year period in the Flathead National Forest, but have concerns about some of the proposed actions.

I am strongly opposed to the proposed 60 miles of new roads in the Swan Valley. We already have hundreds of miles of roads in the valley. Adding more permanent roads will negatively impact the aquatic biodiversity of many bull trout spawning and/or rearing streams including Lost, Goat, Woodward, Squeezer, Lion, Goat, Piper, Cold, and Jim Creeks. It would also negatively impact westslope cutthroat population streams including Whitetail, South Cold, Cooney, Piper, Pony, Cat, Dog, and Smith Creeks.

On page 5 of the Scoping Document, Cold Creek and Jim Creek are deemed "functioning at risk" because of existing high road density, yet, there are new roads proposed in those drainages. This does not make sense.

Also, the proposed new roads above Smith Creek and Goat Creek are high in elevation and very steep. These areas are remote and wild country and should remain that way. There are no structures or residences in these areas, so thinning is unnecessary.

In addition, I am opposed to the proposed new roads in roadless areas, especially those adjacent to the Mission Mountains Wilderness boundary. There is already a lot of illegal snowmobile trespass into wilderness, and the FS has inadequate funds for law enforcement monitoring. Illegal snowmobiling in the wilderness will be worse if new road construction allows easier access.

While I support the stormproofing of existing roads to reduce the sediment washed into riparian areas, I cannot endorse the construction of new roads that would increase sediment to the same riparian areas you are attempting to restore. Take these new roads out of the plan.

I am opposed to the proposed thinning adjacent to Elk Creek. The long-time residents of Swan Valley have worked tirelessly to protect the pristine lands surrounding Elk Creek. In 1994 the Elk Creek Land Exchange was a cooperative effort between the FNF and Plum Creek Timber Co. to place into federal ownership approximately 1,574 acres of land in the headwaters of Elk Creek, a prime bull trout spawning stream. Because it would preserve the pristine forest around Elk Creek, the land exchange had the full support from the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee - a grass-roots group that only took action if they had a consensus from all participants. I am a founding member of the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee and served as the secretary for several years. (The Swan Citizens' Committee morphed into the Swan Ecosystem Center, and is now known as Swan Valley Connections).

Furthermore, Elk Creek is one of the Swan Valley's most productive bull trout spawning streams. In the

FNF Draft Environmental Impact Statement concerning the land exchange dated Feb. 7, 1994, the wildlife biologist states, [ldquo]Elk Creek . . .is the single most important bull trout spawning stream on the Swan River drainage.[rdquo] (chapter 3, pg. 37).

I urge you to insure old growth forest habitat is preserved. The stand of cedars adjacent to Jim Creek in section 6 are some of the largest trees in Swan Valley. The upper reaches of Lion Creek also have numerous large cedars. In addition, the southeastern quarter of Section 4 holds a stand of old-growth western larch which deserves special protection and management.

I am opposed to any thinning project that fragments wildlife habitat and increases stream sediment. Habitat protection is needed for wolverine, lynx, westslope cutthroat trout and other sensitive species

My husband and I own 18 acres in the NW corner of T 21, R17, Section 24. The adjacent Forest Service lands were formerly owned by Plum Creek Timber and extensively logged. There is no need to plan any thinning projects along the boundary of our property. The weeds are rampant in the USFS section adjacent and west of our land (spotted knapweed, hounds tongue, oxeye daisy, yellow hawkweed, etc.). These non-native invasive species continually invade our property and require annual effort to keep these weeds from replacing the native vegetation on our property.

I fully support widespread efforts to restore whitebark pine through plantings, reintroduction of fire, and seed caching. I am also in favor of the installation of beaver dam analogs as long as fish passage is insured.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Sharon Lamar