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First name: Ted

Last name: Zukoski

Organization: Center For Biological Diversity

Title:

Comments: Supervisor Steele:

Attached please find a letter on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity seeking a 45-day extension of the public comment period for the Mid-Swan project.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your reply.

Re: Request for Extension of Comment Period on Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration and Wildland Urban Interface Project

Supervisor Steele:

We request that the Flathead National Forest provide the public a 45-day extension, until November 27, to comment on the Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration and Wildland Urban Interface Project.

We seek this extension for at least three reasons. First, the EIS itself is particularly lengthy, over 400 pages. Additional appendices add another 130 pages for the public to review. This is a significant amount of material to read, understand, and prepare comments on by October 13.

Second, those interested in National Forest protection in Montana faced a competing deadline responding to the Custer Gallatin National Forest's South Plateau project environmental assessment (project no. 57353) for which the comment period ended today, and for which Forest Service regulations prohibit the agency from providing an extension.

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for the public to engage in comment opportunities, as they struggle with stay-at-home remote learning for their children, caretaking for sick family members, or recovering from the illness themselves.

Providing additional time will ensure that the Forest Service receives higher-quality responses and will be able to prepare an improved EIS.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,