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Mr. Brown, Mr. Anderson,

As a resident of the Bitterroot Valley I am very glad to see this project is resuming. The longer we delay, the higher the chance that a wildfire will change the Forest in the Wildland Urban Interface, and the project area. That change won't all be beneficial. Time is very important!!!

Opposition to the project or the proposals to do something called management in the project area are based partially on the idea that the fine details (impacts) of the proposed project cannot be nailed down at this time. What the opponents don't mention is that the fine details (impacts) of a wildfire in the project area or adjacent to project area and in the wildland interface cannot be determined at this time. Which set of impacts do we want to experience??

I prefer the impacts from the management of the Forest which are planned, monitored and managed by the employees of the Bitterroot National Forest instead of a Fire Team assigned to a fire in an emergency situation. Once the Fire Management Team arrives we will be in a crisis situation, at this point in time the options become more limited based on a variety of factors (forest fuel levels, weather, fire location, resource availability). We humans can't control the weather, the fire start location, and at times the resource availability when a fire starts. We can take steps to lessen the Forest fuels thru management of the Forest. What if we experienced a higher number of fires in August, 2021 when national resources were already stretched to the breaking point? Wouldn't we be in a better situation by being proactive to manage the size, shape, quantity, and the arrangement of Forest fuels to something closer to levels where ground crews and equipment can quickly control and extinguish a fire? I think the answer to the second question is yes!!

A few projects have been implemented in the area between Lost Horse Creek and Sweeney Creek over the last 20 years. The progress is at too slow a pace to make a difference in the overall plan to conserve and restore the Bitterroot Front.

My suggestions are: manage the Forest along existing road systems with sheltered fuel breaks where possible, build new roads where it is needed for Forest management, and decommission roads that are not needed. I am pretty sure the BNF has decommissioned more miles of road over the last 25 years than it has built. When roads are needed for management, build them, then decommission the road(s) when it is no longer needed for management.

My last piece of input is about the current BNF Forest Plan. So much has changed in the Forest and the Bitterroot Valley since the plan was signed in 1986. 300,000 acres burned in 2000, how many more people have moved into the WUI, built houses & structures in the WUI(?), a two lane highway 93 was reconstructed as a four lane highway to Hamilton, yet we still have the same basic BNF Forest Plan with some amendments. Thus, the plan needs to be amended multiple times for each project. Restart the Forest Planning process that was started back in the first decade of this century and formulate a plan that fits the current situation.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter and consider my comments.