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Organization: Payette Forest Coalition

Title: Facilitator

Comments: Dear Supervisor Jackson:

By consensus decision, the Payette Forest Coalition respectfully submits its comments regarding the Payette National Forest Resilience and Fuels Reduction Prescribed Fire Project proposed action and looks forward to continuing its engagement with the Payette National Forest throughout the NEPA process. If you have questions, please contact us at the email address on the attached comment letter.

Sincerely,

Payette Forest Coalition

The Payette Forest Coalition (PFC) was formed June 2009 to offer feedback through recommendations and support to the Payette National Forest for management that will improve this Forest's health and resilience. The PFC's goals include increasing forest resilience to fire, insects and disease, supporting wildlife and watershed health, providing recreation opportunities to the public, and economic benefits to rural communities.

This specific resilience and fuels reduction proposed action is to enable the use of prescribed fire in suitable areas that are not already covered under other NEPA actions. We understand the nature of this project is to support an increase in the pace and scale of treatments to forest landscapes in order to increase resiliency of existing vegetation groups, restore proper ecological function to native vegetation communities and wildlife habitats, and improve firefighter and public safety. We encourage the close coordination of the planned application of prescribed fire with other vegetation treatment methods. The Payette Forest Coalition developed and provided a standard set of vegetation treatment recommendations on April 21, 2021 that have applicability to this prescribed fire proposed action.

Our current members, who represent a number of constituent groups, believe the proposed prescribed fire treatments, in conjunction with other treatment methods and tools, can advance the PFC's restoration goals. We recognize there are both positive and negative attributes associated with the application of prescribed fire, and we encourage you to work closely with all stakeholders during all phases of project design, planning and implementation. Effective communication of goals and risks as well as listening to concerns and adjusting plans where possible in order to address these concerns will help gain public support for necessary treatment actions. Your proposed action and planning should clearly address your coordination with state and local governments, members of local communities, adjacent landowners, and grazing allotment owners. Current language in the draft proposed action emphasizes activities such as consultation with tribes, but does not provide similar treatment of these other stakeholders.

The third paragraph of the Proposed Action on page 6 states that prescribed fire could be implemented year around. Escaped prescribed fire and burning during high fire danger periods is a fast way to lose public support. Strict adherence to agency policy regarding the application of prescribed fire will be important to maintaining support for this treatment method.

The Coalition wishes to thank the Payette National Forest employees for their continuing supportive interaction, cooperation and deliberation with the PFC about the management activities on the Payette National Forest. We look forward to working with you further as this prescribed fire project develops.