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First name: Amie

Last name: Eschrich

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on this project. Please find my letter attached.

Amie Eschrich

February 18, 2023

To: Powder River Ranger District, Bighorn National Forest

Johnson County, Wyoming

POLE CREEK VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT

I appreciate the opportunity to have input and express objection to portions of the Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project.

My primary concerns are in regards to areas along the Hazelton Road and Billy Creek Road areas of the project. As a landowner and year-round resident of property that is directly bordering areas proposed for clear cutting and thinning projects, I would like to raise some concerns as well as my complete objection to portions of the proposed project.

According to the map, there is a proposed clear cutting at the northeast boundary of our property, labeled BC01. I am completely opposed to this recommendation. This area of forest is home to many elk during vital times of their reproductive seasons including calving as well as the mating/rut season. There are many elk wallows through this portion of the forest that would be lost. We have had forest treatment plans implemented on our property that should already facilitate any need for clear cutting in this area. We have experienced blow down and slow regeneration in this area and feel any further cutting near this boundary would be detrimental to the wildlife habitat, aesthetics of the forest and could lead to the continuing increase of trespassing on private property, as well as reduce already established dispersed camping on and along the Billy Creek Road. For these reasons I would also object to the clear cutting proposed along the Billy Creek Road in areas labeled BC02, BC03 and BC04.

The area adjacent to BC01 has been proposed as a site for thinning. This is located on the boundary of our property and would directly affect the several 100 elk that calve in this area and find refuge during the spring and summer months. The proposed thinning at this site would make the elk more vulnerable in one of the few parks that are not grazed on by cattle during the summer months. I am opposed to this thinning and request that it be removed from consideration. If it does occur, I would request and propose at least a 300-foot buffer be added to the interior of the existing tree lines to protect the park for wildlife, aesthetics, and potential for blow down of tree lines. A buffer would also help to control the thistle that usually grows in clear cuts after harvesting the trees.

There is a proposed clear-cutting project labeled PO105 that nears the borders our property on the west. In addition to the clear cutting, 3 thinning projects have been proposed along our property in same area. I believe this would negatively impact the elk, moose, mule deer, wild turkeys and pronghorn that live in this area. This could also lead to potential increased trespassing and devalue our property. We have treated areas adjacent to these proposed sites on our property and feel like there has been adequate thinning and clear cutting to maintain

a healthy forest in this area. Increased erosion is also a concern . I would request that these areas be removed from consideration. If this thinning and clear cutting do occur I would request and propose at least a 300 foot buffer from our property line to protect it from blow down risk and to provide shelter for wildlife in the area.

Our property borders the forest on three sides. All three side have been listed as proposed clear cutting and thinning areas. As landowners for over 100 years, our family loves and values the beauty and importance of our forests. We are committed to healthy forests and have worked with State Forest to create a forestry plan on our property. My parents were honored as Tree Farmers of the Year, and we are listed as a Certified Family Forest property owner with the American Tree Farm System. I appreciate the efforts of the US Forest Service to protect the future of our forests and especially the efforts being done to protect and enhance the Bighorn National Forest. I believe the areas on and around Hazelton Road, Billy Creek Road and Doyle Creek and Poison Creek have been selected for too much clear cutting and thinning.

In looking at the map for riparian restoration I was surprised by the area on Hazelton Road on the west side of the road just up the hill from Highway 16 that has been listed as a potential riparian area. It appears to me that this is an upland area and is not near any body of water that would designate this as a potential riparian area. Can you provide additional information on this?

I am in hopes that you reconsider the amount of clear cutting that is proposed near the Pole Creek skiing area as well.

I truly appreciate being able to provide comment on this project and would welcome further discussion and clarification if needed.

Sincerely,

Amie Eschrich