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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Stimson Lumber Company is a privately owned forest products manufacturer and timberland owner with holdings in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Stimson has significant timberland ownership within and immediately adjacent to the proposed Trojan Defense Project west of Troy, MT. Much of the Trojan Defense project area adjoins Stimson timberlands in the Brush Creek and Callahan Creek drainages as well as the area surrounding McConnell Mountain. The project area is located within the Wildfire Crisis Strategy - Kootenai Complex and the Lincoln County Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) which was designated to treat hazardous fuels surrounding communities in NW Montana. These designations make this an ideal project to further enhance cross-boundary efforts conducted on the east side of Troy to mitigate wildfire threats to the Troy community. Stimson Lumber Company strongly supports activities in this proposed action. We encourage fuels treatments over as much of the project area as possible. Effective fuels treatments include reducing stocking levels through harvest activities including thinning, selective harvest, and regeneration harvest methods. Reduction of basal area and removal of ladder fuels will be essential to provide optimum fire protection in the near term. Providing shaded fuels breaks along all permanent travel routes and using temporary roads to access timber stands will ensure that the area transitions to a more fire resilient state, where should a fire occur, it can be safely brought under control. This will ensure the safety of nearby residents, the recreating public, and agency firefighters. Stimson specifically requests that treatments occur on all NFS lands adjoining our property boundaries. Stimson Lumber Company has a vast network of roads accessing our timberlands in this area and we look to coordinate and cooperate with the Three Rivers Ranger District on the use of these existing roads to access the project area and for removal of forest products. Our local timberlands manager is Bruce Rowland. Stimson strongly supports the Kootenai National Forest's plans to apply for an emergency action determination through section 40807 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. For an environmental assessment, this emergency action requires only a proposed action and no action alternative. The proposed action will be designed to treat and reduce fuels within the project area by shifting species composition, size class, and stand densities towards Forest Plan desired conditions. Stimson believes the more rapidly this project can be implemented, the better it will be for the national forest, Stimson's adjacent timberlands and for the surrounding community. Stimson encourages the Three Rivers Ranger District to design and implement a model project which treats all stages of forest fuels within the WUI and the Kootenai Complex, in full alignment with the Agency's stated wildfire strategy directives. This project can serve as an example of cross-boundary coordination that seeks to not only improve the declining health of the National Forest but to provide wildfire protection to adjoining private property, local residences, and critical infrastructure. Treatments will also enhance wildlife habitat in this important area. In closing, Stimson fully supports the proposed action and encourages the district to treat as many acres as possible. These projects take time to develop and making the best use of the opportunity will set this area up for success. Stimson looks forward to partnering with you in this endeavor. Sincerely, Barry Dexter