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Objection to the Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project #61834

To whom it may concern,

After reviewing the modifications to the initial version of the Pole Creek Management Project, additional areas of concern still remain within the project that I would like mitigated. The buffer zones that have been established by the Forest Service between the cutting units and the existing Nordic ski trails leave too much potential for unrestricted winds to scour the snow from the trails leaving them unusable. The notorious and predictable winds that frequent the area known as the Pole Creek Nordic area create a challenge for the winter trail maintenance crew annually. The protection allotted by the existing stands of conifers that have begun to mature since the last Forest Service thinning project have greatly improved the predictability of the depth of snow that falls on the trails. This fact, in conjunction with the weekly trail packing and grooming provided by the Powder Pass Nordic Club have turned former logging skid trails into enjoyable ski trails. Removing units 011 and 012 and the northeast portion of unit 20 from the project will be a benefit to the ski area.

The second notable concern with the revised thinning recommendations, revolves around the WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) treatment to protect human safety. The proposed WUI buffers around the WYDOT camp, Cow camp cabin, and Pole Creek cabin should be reduced from the default 1/3 mile to 200 feet where the ski trails are located nearby. By doing this it will protect both the economic value as well as the integrity of both the ski trails and nearby structures. The suggested 200-foot barrier is proposed to protect and maintain the scenic value of the trail system as well as the trail's ability to hold snow. I ask that these design features be shown and described in detail in Appendix A.

The final concern is one that could/should have been addressed decades ago. The Pole Creek Nordic Ski area has been officially recognized on Forest Service maps for years. Designation of the area as a Winter Sports Area with a primary focus on recreation, both preserving and improving the area, would not only benefit the skiers themselves, but also have a positive effect on local businesses and organizations.

Aaron and Lorajane Kessler