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Organization:

Title:

Comments: These are comments for the Mud Creek Project on the Bitterroot National Forest on the West Fork Ranger District. They are based on the scoping letter sent to the public dated September 6, 2019. Thank you for accepting them

It's difficult to make specific comments as little information is being provided at this time. The maps/modeling examples provided by the BNF in the scoping letter, for me, are unreadable. If more information comes to light and I have the opportunity to comment, I am concerned the BNF will disregard my comments if they were not raised during initial scoping.

I encourage you to work proactively with the public during design and before making decisions. The current method/design of [ldquo]collaboration[rdquo] as put forth by the BNF, in my opinion, is not working. Sending scoping letters or having public meetings in and of itself is not true collaboration. From my involvement with past projects, it feels like the BNF mainly incorporates some comments/issues from the public only in alternatives that are not the FS's preferred alternative. As someone who has tried to be involved and educate myself on public lands issues, I have felt at times that the term [ldquo]collaboration[rdquo] is being misused.

It is my understanding that there are two impaired streams within the project area. I did not find this information in the initial scoping letter to the public. If there are impaired streams within the project area, would you please identify them?

The project area includes IRA's and the Blue Joint WSA. It is my desire that the BNF not implement any mechanical treatment/commercial treatment in those areas.

Please limit commercial logging to the CPZ and focus commercial activities only in MA1.

The effects of thinning to reduce disease and insects seem relatively unknown. I believe it is truly healthier to let insects and disease thin the forest. It is how it has been done for thousands of years.

The scoping letter is very vague regarding roads. Looking at the maps of the Mud Creek project it is clear the area is heavily roaded with much habitat fragmentation. It seems with the current high density of roads in the project area, the Purpose and Need could be met without building any new roads. Given the scarcity of information provided to the public it is my wish to see no roads build or reconstructed. When sufficient information is provided to the public a more meaningful dialog can occur. Given the BNF is between 15 and 20 million dollars behind on road maintenance, as a taxpayer I do not want any more of my money going to road construction.

I did not find mention of Climate Change in the scoping document. Given the state we are in regarding this issue, please provide specific information of how this project slows or reverses Climate Change. I believe future generations will want today's decisions makers accountable for their actions.

What T & E (or sensitive) species are within the project area?

I am greatly concerned about a programmatic Forest Plan amendment for Elk Habitat Effectiveness. The scoping letter states, [ldquo]. . . the elk population in most units of the Bitterroot Valley has continued to grow since the Forest Plan was signed and is over population objective[rdquo]. What are elk numbers specifically for the Mud Creek project area? That information would be helpful.

You say you are considering alternative metrics for elk standards. Please provide what studies you might be referring to and basing this on.

I feel I cannot make specific comments due to a lack of information. I am concerned about the lack of information that is being provided on a project of this size.

Sincerely,

Gary Milner