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Title:

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Dear Ranger Hadlow:

The Payette Forest Coalition formed in June 2009 to offer feedback and support to the Payette National Forest for management that will improve forest health. We believe the Sloans Point Forest Resilience Project aligns with Coalition goals to move the forest toward desired conditions, and we support the proposed action.

The Kennally Creek subbasin was identified as being at high risk of insect and disease infestation and designated for treatment under the 2014 Farm Bill. We recognize that endemic levels of native insects and disease naturally exist in healthy forests. However, the current combination of dwarf mistletoe, western spruce budworm, and invasive non-native Balsam Woolly Adelgid and other insects threatens to accelerate tree mortality. If left unchecked, we can expect an increased risk of wildfire and a loss of timber value in the project area. Therefore, we support your use of a Categorical Exclusion under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act to respond quickly to the situation.

In addition to limiting the extent of insect and disease effects, the proposed suite of vegetation treatments on 2273 acres will help restore desirable species composition, stand structure, and size classes in Sloans Point, thus improving resilience to future disturbance. At the same time, commercial harvest on approximately 600 acres provides an economic benefit to the PNF and local communities.

We also support the evaluation of the three aquatic organism passages and effective treatment of 5.5 miles of unclassified roads to improve watershed conditions. We encourage the Forest Service to evaluate routes for potential recreational use in the future. The Forest Service should make sure that new temporary road construction and management activities are consistent with maintaining or improving soil and watershed conditions.

Finally, the Coalition applauds your use of the Good Neighbor Authority to partner with Idaho Department of Lands to implement the Sloans Point Project efficiently and expeditiously.

The Coalition appreciates the opportunity to comment on behalf of our diverse membership in support of the Sloans Point Forest Resilience Project.

Sincerely,

Payette Forest Coalition