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Comments: My comments are in regards to the Fire and Fuels (FIRE) section, pages 42 and 43. Prescribed burns and fuels mitigation are our best tools to reduce the acreage, severity and cost of future wildfires. I see this new Forest Plan as an excellent opportunity to significantly improve this area of forest management which is often overshadowed by suppression. I would like to see more specific language in regards to fuel management and prescribed burning in the FW section. I was happy to see a specific objective in acreage for hazardous fuels mitigation, however I would like to see more acreage (100,000+) and more specific language regarding the forest/fuel types that would count toward that minimum acreage. As it is written those acres could be any land cover type when the focus needs to be on thick timber with heavy fuel loads, especially areas whose geography would aid the increase in severity and rapid spread of natural wildfire.

A way to address this would be to create a new objective (FW-OBJ-FIRE-02), or amend the existing objective, identifying priority areas and ensuring a minimum percentage of hazardous fuels mitigated (FW-OBJ-FIRE-01) would be from high fuel load/high-priority sites. An accompanying Monitoring Question for the new objective could be, "What forested areas, based on geography and land cover, have the highest risk of high intensity fire?" and "To what extent have fuels mitigated come from these sites?" Indicators could be trees per acre and percent slope with land cover satellite data as a data source.

A barrier to all this of course is air pollution regulations which severely limit prescribed burning activities. In the goals section (FW-GO-FIRE) I would like to see something addressing this. This could be working with state and local governments to ease particulate restrictions or create exceptions for prescribed burning, and also working with the public to educate about its benefits and address resistance to smoke.

I believe this is an effective way to address the ballooning costs of suppression and fire management while also meeting other resource desired conditions (wildlife habitat, vegetation composition, etc.), especially if budgets continue to fall and other departments primarily responsible don't have the means to meet these objectives. I'm not familiar with other forests plans elsewhere in the west, but it would be excellent to have the Custer-Gallatin lead the way in this effort considering the toll fires took on our state last year.

Thank you for your time!