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Comments: After seeing the FEIS for the LaVA project in the Medicine Bow National Forest, I am disappointed that the concerns I expressed for the DEIS were not addressed in the final version. In brief, I still object to:

1.
The number of proposed new roads. If 600 miles of road are built, the character of the Med-Bow will be changed for the foreseeable future, and our relatively small forest will end up having more roads than in any other national forest in Wyoming. Motorized travel, undertaken for logging, recreation and hunting, will greatly increase, disturbing wildlife and ruining the experience for hikers and skiers who like the silence and solitude of undeveloped areas. The noise and disturbance of trucks, ATVs and snow machines will negatively affect elk, moose and deer, as well as smaller mammals. Mule deer, a species of concern in the Med-Bow in recent years, need to be protected. Another negative result of roadbuilding will be that coyotes will use the roads, especially in winter, to enter areas where they now are rarely seen, hurting the balance of prey and predators. A remedy for these problems would be to build fewer roads.

2.
The cost of the roads. Because of budget cuts, the Forest Service has struggled recently to maintain the recreational areas it currently manages. Trails are overgrown; campgrounds receive minimal NFS oversight. If a huge project like LaVA is built, funds will be sucked out of the regional budget, causing further neglect of other Forest Service areas. The remedy would be to scale back the project.

3. The amount of proposed logging and other treatments. The damage caused by 95,000 acres of clear cutting, 165,000 acres of uneven-aged treatment, and 100,000 acres of other vegetative treatment is mind boggling. The forest will be carved up into patches, creating eye sores and diminished habitat for animals like martens, which depend on climax vegetation. In times of drought or dry weather, tree regeneration will be minimal, causing erosion. The LaVA project is simply too large. Best practices of forest management demand that the amount of proposed logging be reduced.

The LaVA project in the Medicine Bow National Forest needs to be scaled back on all fronts. Unfortunately, the FEIS hasn't changed my impression that the project is being undertaken to create jobs. People need jobs, yes, but the Forest Service also has the responsibility to protect the plant and animal resources of the forest. As currently planned, the Medicine Bow National Forest will be over-logged and over-run with roads and motorized use, much to the long-term detriment to the forest as a whole and the people who love it in its most natural state.

Mary Buskirk