Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/11/2020 3:54:09 AM
First name: Pete
Last name: Gosar
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I write to object to the revised Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LAVA) Project. I searched through the LAVA Project's documents and could not discern where the 600 miles of new road will be located or the reasons required for that amazing number of miles. The Medicine Bow Range is already crisscrossed with roads, both legal and illegal, and 600 more miles will continue to fragment an already fragmented habitat. And fragmented habitat has devastating consequences.

Countless studies of wild game populations have detailed, time and again, the importance of an unfragmented habitat to the success of these populations. In light of these findings, it is hard to justify 600 miles of new roads and harder to believe that these roads are in the public's interest. The scope of this project requires transparency and the roads need to be detailed on an included timeline and delineated clearly on a project map.

The amount of timber acreage to be harvested within the LAVA Project is immense and unprecedented in the history of the Medicine Bow Forest. With the amount of acreage proposed, there is little doubt that the LAVA Project intends to clear-cut healthy parts of the Medicine Bow Forest. The pine bark beetle infestation of the recent past has left the forest with few healthy stands of trees, and clear-cutting whole swaths of what little is left, deserves a clear and compelling argument. I could find no such argument in the documents or even the mention of it.

Additionally, there are other troubling pieces of the Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LAVA) Project and many questions come to mind. For instance, what vegetation is being analyzed, by whom and for what reason(s)? What will the U.S. Forest Service do with the analysis and how will the project be paid for? There needs to be answers to these and other important questions. As it stands, the LAVA Project should be shelved until the public has been provided with clear answers to legitimate questions, objectives are clearly defined, the proposed roads are detailed and mapped, and the critical habitats and the riparian areas are removed from consideration. The Medicine Bow Forest is an important ecosystem and needs to be regarded as such. The Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LAVA) Project, in its current form, is simply, not ready to be the overarching management guide for the Medicine Bow Forest.