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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment. As the planning process unfolded, I anticipated going through your preferred option and examining how it compared to my previous comments. Unfortunately, within six months of submitting those comments, the Forest Service came out to a York community meeting and told everyone about the Middleman Project (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57506>). We learned that the Middleman Project could span up to 15 years, would build 61 miles of temporary roads, and would improve many miles of the 103 miles of haul roads identified. In all likelihood, the project would be the largest Forest Service activity in the northern Big Belts during the life of the new Forest Plan. Finally, we learned that the Middleman Project would not be governed by the new Forest Plan, but by the existing 1986 plan.

My family and I lived in York for the last four years. Recently we moved into Helena. But the northern Big Belts—from Hedges Mountain north into Indian Flats, northwest to Moors Mountain, west along Willow Creek to the Missouri, southeast down the Missouri, and back into the Hedges area via Magpie Gulch—remain my home ground. I care deeply about that landscape.

You would not be surprised, then, to learn how deflated I was when first hearing about the Middleman Project and its detachment from the new Forest Plan. And then the further disappointment when reading the scoping document and learning that the Middleman Project was seeking a long list of exemptions for many of the requirements in the 1986 plan.

No, I won't comment on the Land Management Plan or the Regional Forester's list of Species of Conservation Concern. To what end? The Middleman Project will have the biggest impact on the landscape I use and love. Use the Middleman Project page link above and read my comments, listed on that page as "3_20200206_Donohoe Redacted".

Thanks,

Joe Donohoe