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Organization: Conservation Congress

Title:

Comments: Dear Supervisor Steele and Mr. Krueger;

I have read SVCs request to you to extend the review and comment period for the Mid-Swan DEIS. Conservation Congress concurs. This is a massive project proposing "condition-based management" which the FS hasn't used before. The public needs additional time to read and understand this information.

We request that you extend the Mid-Swan DEIS public review and comment period an additional 45 days for the following reasons:

1. The DEIS and its Appendices, including the Implementation Guide on Restoration, are lengthy and require the reader to essentially learn a whole new "condition-based management" language and vocabulary.
2. The DEIS and its Appendices require the reader to become extensively knowledgeable about the revised Forest Plan, which likewise requires the reader to essentially learn a whole new "Forest Plan" language and vocabulary - even for those that have been involved since the beginning of Flathead Plan revision in 2013.
3. The DEIS and its Appendices do not include essential supportive documents, such as "The Assessment," nor are those documents or an index to Project File documents listed on the Mid-Swan Project web page. This requires readers to submit FOIA requests to the Flathead National Forest for these documents, which burns substantial holes in the 45-day DEIS comment period even if the Flathead expedites its responses.
4. The Flathead NF continues to conduct open houses and add the resulting materials, as well as interactive maps, to the Mid-Swan Project web page
(<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/flathead/landmanagement/projects/?cid=fseprd787388&width=full>
<<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fs.usda.gov%2Fdetailfull%2Fflathead%2Flandmanagement%2Fprojects%2F%3Fcid%3Dfseprd787388%26width%3Dfull&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cd775cf16e43b4528552f08d85a52c41b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637358658803233197&sdata=AcTakToEDXrY93ZxKtoV0ze1OPetElcGoRMz%2FHxX9Ig%3D&reserved=0>>). While those additional materials may prove useful, they nonetheless require additional time and effort to review and utilize.
5. The Mid-Swan Project Area is 174,205 acres in size and proposes land- and vegetation-disturbing management activities spanning at least 15 years on 68% of those acres.
6. The Mid-Swan Project stands to have substantial effects on a host of at-risk species, including threatened grizzly bear, lynx and bull trout - and reportedly requires amendments to the Forest Plan due to excessive impacts.

The initial 45 days is wholly inadequate for the public to read, research and provide informed public comment on the DEIS, proposed amendments to the Forest Plan, and management activities spanning decades on this huge chunk of landscape.

Please add 45 days to the current 45-day comment period to help facilitate informed public involvement and better responses to your request for public feedback.

Thank you and we look forward to your reply,