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Comments: We would like to submit this comment on the proposed Mud Creek Project, on the West Fork District of the Bitterroot National Forest. First, congratulations on a careful and detailed analysis, yielding a well-thought-out plan. Our biggest concern was that the the Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area and inventoried roadless areas not be degraded so that they would not be eligible for designated Wilderness consideration, and this is addressed in the proposal. We also think that past USFS practices have made the public wary of Conditional Approval, but recent practices make us comfortable with this process. We also understand the reason for using Conditional Approval, since changing conditions will determine the appropriate treatments.
Our biggest concern with this proposal is the large openings or clearcuts, of more than 40 acres. Although areas with potential for large openings are delineated in the EA, Conditional Analysis means that that there are no specific openings planned. Will there be a potential for future additional public involvement if such large openings become likely? Also, we hope that clearcuts or other large openings could have irregular edges (i.e., not square or rectangular), and, if possible, ragged or gradual margins.
Thanks again for a thoughtful proposal, and we hope that you are able to accomplish your goal of increasing forest resiliency.
Sincerely,
Kathryn Tilly and Joe Rimensberger