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First name: Mark
Last name: Van Loon
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Seth Carbonari, District Ranger
West Fork Ranger District, 6735 West Fork Rd., Darby. MT. 59829

Subject: Comments on Mud Creek Project # 55744

from: Mark Van Loon

I am neither a scientist nor a lawyer, but a concerned citizen. While I may lack the educated expertise necessary to wade thru the EA document, several things jump out at me.

The public comment period has been shortened to 30 days and is over before the area is even accessible, weather wise, to the public. Also, as a "conditions based" project, details are not disclosed until AFTER the public comment period. Yet you ask for detailed and specific comments. This is ridiculous and is the surest route to multiple lawsuits. This project is over 48,000 acres and includes the Blue Joint WSA. A full EIS is required and I think lack of one violates NEPA rules.
You are seeking to amend the existing Old Growth Standard of the existing Forest Plan to accommodate the particulars of this project. This is not acceptable. If established guidelines cannot be met, the project should be amended, not the guidelines.
The clear cut areas specified for "regeneration" need a full EIS, followed by at least a 60 day public comment period which would not commence until the areas were fully accessible, usually deemed June 1st or thereabouts.
You also basically ignore the impacts on the area as a Grizzly Bear Recovery Area. Likewise Canada Lynx, Bull Trout, Elk Habitat and virtually any species other than motorized humans, who seem to have designed the "roads" part of the plan. Three large loop trails are "necessary" and won't be decommissioned afterwards. Really? Unacceptable. The area already has multiple roads and erosion and sediment from the existing roads is not controlled now. This area drains into and affects the West Fork and Bitterroot fisheries and impacts from it must be fully considered. A full EIS is necessary.
Seth - in my previous interactions with you - specifically the Piquett Creek Project - you seemed reasonable and caring. Rushing this project thru with seemingly wonton disregard for established rules and methods seems reckless at best. To say I'm surprised is a vast understatement.