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Comments: Big Creek/Edwardsburg residents will be directly and materially impacted by this project. In addition to the overwhelming concerns expressed by many other commenters on a seemingly endless Forest Service march to fundamentally reduce public access to the Forest and its benefits, the Big Creek Fire Department has two specific concerns:

First, the entire Forest continues to be a tinder box that could go up in catastrophic fire for a great deal of the year. One of the most critical management tools in the arsenal is rapid detection and response to potential wildfire. Closing, destroying, or locking down vehicle capable routes (both formal and informal) compromises access that any potential investigator or local defender has to potential fire starts. Getting to the potential fire site fast is one of the best offenses. Always having to wait for communications and dispatch of Forest Service resources costs excessive time and money when speed is of the essence.

This risk of reduced local access to investigate fire is real. Two years ago there was a large smoke plume in the Big Creek valley near the Moscow Mine and local residents, including the Fire Chief, were blocked from investigating because of the Forest Service gate that closed the Moscow Mine road. The FS was responsive with a crew the NEXT DAY but had it been a true wildfire 24 hours of containment opportunity would have been lost.

Second, reduction of access and routes in the EFSF RAMP area WILL move vehicles and recreators deeper into the Payette Forest area. Specifically, additional pressure will be put on the Big Creek/Edwardsburg community and surrounding valley. This is counter productive to the Big Creek RAMP and other conservation efforts in the area. Outdoor recreation has obviously been growing in popularity - people will come into the Payette to enjoy. That is a good thing for our businesses and the public. But to focus the inevitable users onto fewer, shorter routes increases danger of traffic accidents, dust, and speeding. Its just like "squeezing a water balloon". Fewer routes will also cause the accessible areas to be "over used" - which is not good for conserving either nature or public enjoyment. Safety needs to be a top priority and it is not reasonable to assume that less roads will mean less traffic. It is also clear that reduction of vehicle accessible recreation opportunities in the EFSF area will put unhealthy pressure on the Big Creek valley.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to comment on the EFSF RAMP project at this early stage.