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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Baldy Mountain Landscape Resiliency and Habitat Improvement Project:

Hello-This project area is very familiar to me. It is directly with the view shed of our neighborhood and all of the town of Ridgway. I have hiked in the project area many times. I lead trail maintenance work in and near the project area. I would like to object to this project on the following grounds:

Logging and burning up on the NW face of Baldy will be highly visible to residents: this project will degrade our view of the immediate landscape.

There are already plenty of Bighorn Sheep habitat within the project area, as there is a high degree of landscape and vegetation types on Baldy. Sheep move around a lot, and are not confined to this area.

Most of the project area is very steep and un-roaded, so it would seem that roads would need to be graded in to facilitate mechanical mulching. Given the already very poor maintenance of Forest Service roads in this Ranger District, new rural road construction would greatly increase erosion and runoff.

While small controlled burns would be helpful for fuels reduction, there is little chance of "catastrophic" fires, given the lack of facilities and buildings anywhere near the project site, and the proximity of uninhabited wild lands. The scope of the proposed fuels reductions appears to be far too large given the overall project size. It appears the fire danger is greatly exaggerated. If you really care about Bighorn sheep, remove the feral domestic sheep that live in this area.

This project appears to really only benefit the rancher immediately adjacent. Therefore it appears to be a publicly funded subsidy to a private interest. The rancher has very low stocking rates due to lack of developed water resources, not for lack of abundant pasture and feed. Encouraging cattle grazing would lead to more erosion of the public resource and less native feed for wildlife, including Elk, Deer and Bighorn sheep. The forest you plan to remove acts as a natural barrier between livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.

Lastly, I am very concerned about damage to trails immediately adjacent to the project area, such as the Baldy, Storm Gulch, Baldy Ridge, Shortcut, Okeson and Cutler creek trails. If fire and chipping operations carry over to these well-used trails, it would greatly affect the quality and maintenance of these trails.