

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/15/2022 12:59:46 AM

First name: Janet

Last name: Stepan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: It appears that the Spruce Vegetation Management Project #61599 is designed to solely benefit the timber companies and Intermountain Forest Association under the guise of fire prevention, even though, ironically, spruce trees have little value as timber and are probably less prone to fires than pine. By replacing spruce with pine and aspen trees, you not only upset the localized ecological systems, but you are ultimately planting trees in areas where they do not thrive. Senators Thune and Barrasso are pushing to expedite timber production while circumventing the critical processes that ensure environmental protections, such as NEPA, Environmental Assessments (EA), and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), which appears to be a red flag to me. Politicians appear to be more interested in backing the lumber companies than thinking of the short-and long-term effects that such a decision would have. Not only will it affect the overall beauty of the area, (which attracts many tourists every year (and with it their money for the region), but even more importantly, the overall habitat of the specific animals and plants that now reside in spruce stands. Saving industry in the short-term must not be at the mercy of beautiful the Black Hills in the long-term.