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Title:

Comments: I support the Bitterroot Front project wholeheartedly. It is important in order to reduce the fire risk to private property, structures, and other values at risk on the west side of the Bitterroot Valley. More importantly, it will also greatly help protect lives by reducing the fuels to more acceptable levels that will assist in reducing fire intensities and spread rates towards the important values. There are three factors that drive fire behavior, fuels, weather, and topography. Fuels is the only one of those factors that we have control over in a fire environment. As many of us know, fires have threatened these values in the Bitterroot for decades. Examples of this include the Fires of 2000 burning over 350,000 acres destroying private homes and property not to mention countless natural resource values; 2003 Big Creek fire, 2006 Gash Creek fire, 2007 Tin Cup fire, 2009 Kootenai Creek fire, 2012 Sawtooth fire, 2013 Gold Pan fire, 2016 Roaring Lion fire, and the 2017 Lolo Peak fire. There are others I have not included but the list does go on and on. Most of the drainages in this project area are oriented west to east, which is usually the prevailing wind during the fire season. Fires can spread straight down these canyons from the National Forest, eventually impacting private land. It is critical that fuels be treated along the Bitterroot Front, especially given the extreme fire years we have been experiencing since 2000. It is important to treat fuels beyond the Home Ignition Zone (120 feet around the home). This is especially true given the multitude of one-way in and one-way out roads leading to homes because in order to protect lives, safe evacuation routes need to be established to allow residents an effective way to escape a threatening wildfire. This also provides firefighters a more safe and effective place to attack a threatening wildfire. Treating fuels outside the Home Ignition Zone will reduce the probability of a surface fire from becoming a devastating crown fire and also reduce the probability of a running crown fire by reducing the aerial fuels that cause a crown fire from burning through the crowns as an active crown fire and hopefully dropping to the ground becoming a less intense surface fire. Please go forward with this project because if you don't manage the forest, the forest will manage us as evidenced by fire the past 20+ years. It is better to be proactive spending our tax dollars before a fire happens than millions when having to react to a devastating fire. Thanks for considering my comments.