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Comments: At a chance meeting I talked with District ranger Steve Brown about this project just a couple of days ago. He's on the right track.

Think back: The piled-up understory fuels along Hy. 93 was a big factor in the explosive destruction of the Hughes Creek fire along the East Fork. The forest floor around Spring Gulch Campground was cleared of understory fuel. The piled-up dead branches were converted to firewood for camp fires, and Spring Gulch was spared when the fire took out virtually all of the trees outside the campground area.

Since the fires that raged along the West Fork in recent years, I have friends on the West Fork whose participation in fuel reduction programs have left their property's timber stands better managed and more secure against the threat of future fires.

Opposition to fuel reduction in the state of California, where know-it-all ignorance from the top down prevailed over the sound and effective fuel reduction practices that PG&E had in place for nearly 100 years, resulted in the fires that destroyed my former home in Paradise, and devastated much of the Feather River country in the western sierras that I loved.

Unfortunately, know-it-all ignorance is not unique to California.

Here in the Bitterroot, we've seen too much devastation from forest fires that have spread to horrific proportions as the fires raged through fuel on the forest floor, the debris from former poorly managed logging.

We need the offset of sound management, in the form of this fuel reduction program. Piled-up and dried-out slash from previous logging operations creates volatile fuel overloads that need to be dealt with; brushy overgrowth in the wake of second and third timber cuttings needs to be thinned.

Simply put, if the fuels throughout our forests are reduced, more standing harvestable timber will be allowed to grow, valuable wildlife habitat will be enhanced, watersheds will be stabilized (a big consideration for me), and we'll have less smoke to breathe in coming summers.

I strongly support the current fuel reduction plan.