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Comments: An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is necessary for a project of this magnitude. The 144,000-acre project spans the entire east face of the Bitterroots from Florence to Darby. It will degrade wildlife habitats, streams, water, air, and carbon sequestration. An EIS requires a more thorough analysis than the planned Environmental Assessment (EA).

Condition-based analysis is not appropriate. This multi-decade project relies on computer modeling instead of an on-the-ground, site-specific analysis. Public input is eliminated from the decision-making process.

No roads, temporary or otherwise, should be constructed or reconstructed in the project area. The Bitterroot National Forest is decades behind on the maintenance of currently existing roads with little hope of catching up. More roads would put the agency further behind.

Allow only hand thinning (no commercial logging) in Recommended Wilderness, roadless Management Area 5, and Inventoried Roadless Areas. Roadless areas provide intact habitats for wildlife. Do not fragment what little remains.

Respect and adhere to riparian zone protections. The project area includes critical habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

Allow only hand thinning in old growth, no ground disturbance or commercial logging.

Do not change the Forest Plan definition of old growth to 8 large trees per acre. Retain all trees 16 inches diameter (dbh) or greater in compliance with the recent Executive Order directing the preservation and protection of mature and old-growth forests.

Retain Forest Plan standards that protect wildlife. Elk habitat, old growth, coarse woody debris, snag retention, hiding cover, and thermal cover standards should be upheld. Wildlife relies on these standards to survive and thrive in our forest.

This project area is a linkage zone and migration corridor for wildlife including elk, Canada lynx, wolverine, fisher,

and bears. Project activities must not degrade or fragment this vital connectivity area

Do not create large openings (clear-cuts). Large openings remove natural windbreaks and have been shown to increase wildfire speed and intensity.

Project activities conflict with climate goals. Logging and road building increase carbon emissions, remove carbon stores, and reduce future carbon sequestration.