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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Bitterroot Front project and the collaborative effort in which you are developing the project. Our community has the highest fire hazard in the state of Montana, this fact is not disputed. What is disputed by a small minority in our community is the solution. An overwhelming majority of our community, myself included, believes that active forest management, wildlife habitat, recreation, water quality, fire and fuels reduction and water quality are not mutually exclusive. We can reduce the risk of wildfire and have forest products revenues in our community forests while preserving wildlife habitat, viewsheds and water quality. Management and conservation are not mutually exclusive and I would argue they are mutually beneficial. Opposition to the project will cite studies that reducing fire fuels increases fire behavior. Any person that has been on the end of a shovel, pulaski or hose nozzle will tell you otherwise. Studies have shown that our community is prime for another Roaring Lion fire event and the development in our interface has grown significantly since that catastrophic fire. Studies are showing that there will be long term respiratory health affects from hazardous air quality resulting from wildfires. Studies will show that reducing fuel loading from dead and dying trees in our forest will result not only in reduced fire behavior, but can reduce carbon release. Studies will show negative impacts to fish and wildlife habitat from catastrophic wildfires. The solution is not to ignore the emanant wildfire threat that faces our community, environment and public health and safety. The Bitterroot Front project is critical for our community and the time is now.