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Comments: COMMENTS ON BITTERROOT FRONT PROJECT

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In the beginnings of her recent book "The Hour of Land" Terry Tempest Williams says "This is what we can promise the future: a legacy of care. That we will be good stewards and not take too much or give back too little, that we will recognize wild nature for what it is, in all its magnificent and complex history - an unfathomable wealth that should be consciously saved, not ruthlessly spent."

With that fresh in my mind, I can only hope that those of you who are actually paid to do the right thing by our remarkable treasure, the Bitterroot Range, will actually do it. The Forest Service plan for desecration of more than 50,000 acres of our wild lands without an Environmental Impact Statement is a mistake. Because it covers an overall area of nearly 150,000 acres, the impacts will be monumental. In addition, the invitation to adjacent property owners to join in the project could increase the project by thousands more acres, and those neighbors could probably join in without the environmental limitations encountered by the Forest Service. This proposed project will destroy huge areas of habitat for both flora and fauna, and will disconnect important migrations routes for all kinds of wildlife, large and small. This must not be done on a wing and a prayer.

If you truly believe in this project, do it right from start to finish. Do not circumvent procedures that have been developed to protect our wild lands and wildlife. We don't have to imagine what the Bitterroot front will become if this project moves forward as proposed - just drive to Florence and look to the northwest where the illegal ski resort still glares down on the valley from both public and private lands, and bisects the wilderness.