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Comments: The scale of the proposed project from Florence to Conner will have major impact on our valley. For the USFS to be authorized for decisions on this scale and extended time period, the parameters for activity need to be very clearly defined, in order to justify site specific comment being obviated. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is necessary for a project of this magnitude. An EIS requires a more thorough analysis than the planned Environmental Assessment (EA).

As the project spans the entire east face of the Bitterroots along the main community corridor and our major communities. We need to be sure that project activities in the process of reducing wildfire risk do NOT degrade wildlife habitats, streams, water, air and other amenities and visual qualities important to local human residents.

Climate considerations are not specified in the project proposal, although

the USFS has pledged to consider climate factors and current research in all new projects. Given the increasingly arid climate regime we are experiencing a detailed analysis of project directions and how they will specifically reduce wildfire risk in this context is essential.

Current science indicates that "old growth" trees (30-40 years in age or older) sequester far more carbon than smaller trees that replace them. Current climate mitigation forestry science suggests every mature healthy tree remain standing, even if this makes commercial partnering less attractive.

A considerable body of recent research questions the usefulness of "thinning" significant areas of forest out beyond the immediate HIZ within 150 ft of structures. Recent research suggests funds spent supporting owner responsibility in the HIZ could reduce fire risk to the human community far more effectively than thinning at a greater distance. Observed fire behavior causing the most serious human community destruction in the last few years strongly supports this direction. Communities must also take responsible positions on what services they offer to those who chose to live in zones of greater fire risk. The project should be designed to encourage this.