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Comments: The Longmont and Boulder Valley Conservation Districts (the "Conservation Districts") support the proposed forest management work on national forest lands in the St. Vrain Forest Health Project area, and support the stated project goals. Restoring the forests not only helps those communities in the foothills, but everyone downstream as well. The Conservation Districts frequently work with landowners who are adjacent to USFS lands, and have heard time and time again that the private landowners conducting forest restoration work are concerned about the lack of progress on National Forest land. A coherent landscape strategy combining private landowners and USFS forests would greatly benefit all parties involved.

The work proposed ought to follow scientific principles of forest restoration (such as those outlined in the GTR-373) in order to maximize the long term benefits. Thinning from below or evenly-spaced thinning will not meet the long term project goals of improving forest resilience, restoring fire dynamics, or conserving biodiversity.

Restoration projects on National Forest need to be large enough and bold enough to make a difference on the landscape scale. An adaptive ecological approach of creating and enhancing meadows at scale, leaving trees in groups and clumps, and creating heterogeneity at all scales across the landscape is key. Followup management for invasive plants and regeneration is also a necessary step to prevent unwanted ecological outcomes.

Additionally, bringing fire back onto the landscape is the only way to have true project longevity, and prescribed burning will be crucial to maintaining any restored areas in the long term.

Including local scientists and foresters in the process will make for an effective landscape scale collaborative approach that will enhance not only the Forest Service projects, but projects on private lands adjacent to National Forest. Collaborating across boundaries is the only way to effectively create a strategic approach to meet the outlined project goals.