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First name: Rebecca

Last name: Ward

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Custer Gallatin Forest Managers,

I strongly encourage the Forest Service to rethink the South Plateau Area Landscape Treatment Project. South Plateau is an area of scenic majesty and necessary habitat encompassing grassy meadows, timbered hills, creeks and springs. South Plateau's physical proximity to Yellowstone provides greater habitat for so many different wildlife species who are or should be important to all Americans. It provides for greater connectivity to other landscapes so necessary as corridors of "safe" movement.

What do we stand to lose should this area be "treated" as noted in the plan? South Plateau is high and relatively dry. With climate change negatively impacting the globe, it seems ludicrous to think this area will regrow in 90 years. Perhaps we should be thinking in terms of whether a forest will regrow at all. Are we possibly setting this landscape up to become a grass/invasive weed landscape where lodgepole, the climax species, no longer flourishes? The plan promotes habitat fragmentation and for wildlife this means loss of use for movement, denning and feeding, surviving.

A negative side effect of clearcutting and to a lesser extent thinning of trees, especially shallow-rooted trees like lodgepole pine, is the impact of wind on stands of trees. When lodgepole lose their protective neighboring trees they often to topple to the ground. Witness the 40 to 50 feet of what are now periphery trees that fall during wind events that create a labyrinth of downed trees around the remaining stand. Needless to say, 40 acre clearcut "patches" lead to clear cut areas far larger than those original 40 acres.

Research has shown that clearcutting timber does not reduce fires. Contrary to fire reduction activity's focus, fires in clearcuts have been shown to increase fire temperatures (thus fire severity) and to create a greater rate of fire movement/spread through the landscape. Isn't that the opposite of what the Forest Service and nearby communities hope for?

Road building to the extent it is to be done in this project is ludicrous. Roads encourage human activity which negates all hope for habitat that is important to wildlife species. Even when these roads are mitigated/rehabbed, they will continue to be used by humans even if the roads are gated. Roads encourage massive non-native plants (thistle, knapweed, non-native grasses etc.) Are we to sink even more money into the 16,000 project to control invasive weeds as well as introduce chemicals into the area as weed control agents?

Reducing pine beetle infestation through clearcutting and thinning doesn't appear to be working. Witness the numerous areas (Homestake Pass as an example) where thinning as a means of beetle control took place. Far more additional trees died from beetle movement or blow down post-thinning action.

At a time when most of us are concerned about the urban interface negatively impacting Yellowstone National Park, it is ludicrous to plan a fuel reduction activity of this size on the doorstep of the world's most iconic landscape. Fuel reduction, "beetle control", logging jobs DOES NOT EQUAL nor does it justify loss of habitat, disturbance to wildlife, disturbance of soils, high cost to taxpayers (in cost of road building eventual mitigation as well as the impact of hundreds of logging trucks on state and county roads, cost of weed control etc.) and impact on a national park's inhabitants.