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Comments: I think that the purpose of this project is valid and needed on our forests. This is a big project which has the potential to facilitate important work on our forests. While I understand that the focus of his project is to reduce the risks of high severity wildfires and to restore and maintain healthy fire-adapted ecosystems I do have concerns about the potential impact to the recreational assets in the Pisgah National Forest. Recreational use is high on this forest and is an economic driver to many of the surrounding communities. To help mitigate these impacts I recommend the following:

Recreation groups (SORBA, BCH, CMC, etc) need to be involved early in the planning of projects in order to ensure that damage to existing trails is minimized and repaired to standard, that opportunities to improve trails and trail systems can be utilized in future collaborative trail planning projects, and that information can be dispersed to recreation user groups in any affected areas.

Recreation groups should be involved in early planning of projects in areas where non-system trails are being evaluated for possible addition to the trail system. Examples include but are not limited to the Boone Fork and Blue Gravel areas in the Grandfather District. These groups should also be involved with early planning of projects in areas where new trail systems are being developed such as those which are a part of the Old Fort Back Country Outdoor Recreation Trail Proposal.

There is a concern about fire lines created by these projects. Recreation groups should be involved with discussions regarding how to deal with the potential of these becoming informal trails.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Julie White