Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/4/2022 8:49:54 PM
First name: Eric
Last name: Smith
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Please accept these comments on the proposed South Plateau Landscape Treatment Project.

I am opposed to the United States Forest Service (USFS) plan to clearcut 5500 acres, "thin" over 9,000 acres, and build 56 miles of new road in the South Plateau area of the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

The USFS claim that they need to reduce fuel loads due to imminent danger from mountain pine beetle so as to prevent wildfire from occurring in the area is not supported by scientific research. Research shows that beetle-killed trees don't burn more severely than green trees, and in the gray stage may burn less severely than green trees. Furthermore, large stand-replacing events, like what is occurring in the South Plateau area of Custer Gallatin National Forest are natural and occur periodically in high-elevation forests.

This remote area, along the Continental Divide, sits right on a major wildlife migration corridor from Yellowstone to Central Idaho. It provides critical habitat for grizzly bears, wolverine, Canada lynx, moose, elk, wolves, and dozens of bird species. It's a popular destination for cross country skiing and is right next to the Continental Divide National Recreation Trail.

This project, released under the new Custer Gallatin National Forest Land Management Plan, would last 15 years and haul away over 10,000 trucks worth of logs to enrich two timber companies. The Environmental Assessment that the USFS is proposing falls far short of what needs to be done to critically assess the project. For this reason, I would request that the project be withdrawn and an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared with reasonable and scientifically-based alternatives.

Wilderness is a self-willed landscape where we should let nature roll the dice, not a place where we try to force ecological conditions to our liking. Please drop this plan to cut and thin the South Plateau area of the Custer Gallatin National Forest.