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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Butte Ranger District

Attn: Michelle Peterson

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RE: Basin Creek - Butte Watershed Project

I'm writing to comment in support of the proposed forestry work in the Basin Creek Watershed near Butte Montana. The current forested landscape of this watershed is a result of historic forestry management (historical logging and fire exclusion) as well as the purposeful lack of management in the years prior to the construction of the Basin Creek Water Treatment Plant. Because of this, the area is prone to fire caused naturally or accidentally. Even a moderate fire in the basin could result in catastrophic results for the new \$30 million, state-of-the-art treatment municipal water treatment plant.

By thinning and performing prescribed burns, along with a weed management plan, the plant species diversity and plant cover should increase. This is based on the results of similar projects in similar forest-types in the region. This will not only decrease the threat of large fires, but should increase soil retention, ecological resilience, and provide better wildlife habitat.

Additionally, the Basin Creek plant were to go offline due to a catastrophic wildfire, Butte - Silver bow may have to increase their use of their Big Hole water right, affecting a number of water-users and a fishery which is already facing dewatering and a warming climate.