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Comments: The main reason for this personal 'comment' is to ask the Forest Service to remove Pole Creek Nordic & Powder Pass 449 Areas from the Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project #61834 and formally designate them as Winter Sports Areas. Other concerns are addressed below.

I do agree that the forests here, and in many places, are more prone to larger, more destructive wildfires since humans have been trying to suppress natural fires all around the country for over a hundred years. Fires will come, sooner or later, and the more planning done to try and make these fires more of a natural occurrence rather than huge, devastating wildfires due to suppression is a good thing. I appreciated some of the thoughtful topics brought up at the public meeting such as: using fire in remote roadless areas to create clearings in the timber instead of building more roads to clear-cut in these roadless areas; the closing of roads in certain areas to create more elk security habitat if it is lost in other areas.

But, I do not understand why these two Nordic ski areas have not already been designated as Winter Sports Areas and protected from destruction. They have been in existence for over 50 years with constant annual community financial support through various entities of the county and through private donations, and also supported with thousands of hours of annual community volunteer support in trail maintenance and improvements. I personally have donated money and volunteered hours to keep and improve this great recreational opportunity so close to our community. I had believed they were already designated as such when I researched available Nordic ski areas in the area 10 years ago. All the maps, signs, and information I have seen show them as public designated Nordic ski areas on Forest Service land - not as "temporary" ski areas subject to removal by some proposed vegetation management project (i.e. clearcutting, etc). The non-funded cost-share agreement between PPNC and the Forest Service for many years has made possible the building up of these really nice and rare Nordic ski areas through all the efforts mentioned above. I would think the F.S. would be proud of its part in this accomplishment. As a resident of Buffalo, Wyo., I can't really believe that clearcutting or destroying these ski areas is even really being considered or proposed by the Forest Service.

The following is a quote from the PPNC letter sent to members: "To provide recreation opportunities and create partnerships are two of the primary management objectives identified in the 2005 Forest Plan". According to your own F.S. plan, providing recreation opportunities is an objective. In all of the Big Horn mountains there are only a few designated Nordic ski areas, and this project would essentially remove two of these areas. The land in question is a small percentage of the overall project. I have not researched this and do not have the exact numbers but economically it seems that the recreation the Big Horn mountains offer (i.e. hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, backpacking, wildlife watching, photography, etc) is more important to our local communities and economies than other revenue sources or agendas the F.S. has. If all of the proposed clear-cut areas and 1/3 mile buffer zones are cut this will have a huge impact on the recreation and aesthetics in a large area of the southern end of this mountain range. Clear-cut areas are big ugly scars on the land that take decades to recover - from my 45 years of experience living out in the west. I don't understand how this proposal can comply with the F.S.'s Scenery Management System. At the public meeting for this proposal, I heard the comment made by a F.S. employee that "no socioeconomic studies have been undertaken, or are planned, for this proposed project". How can a proposal this large and with this scope (20 yrs?) not include a study of the socioeconomic effect it will have on surrounding communities?? Or what about an EIS? The environmental impact statement (EIS) is a government document that outlines the impact of a proposed project on its surrounding environment. Well this is a pretty huge, long term project for this area.

Another thing I was confused about at the public meeting was the mention of a 1/3 mile buffer (i.e. no trees) around all structures in the proposal area. So clear-cut a circle 2/3 of a mile in diameter (219 acres) around all

structures?? For only 10 isolated structures that would be approximately 2,190 acres or 3.4 square miles more of clear-cut areas. With the little research I did on Forest Service WUI wildfire treatments this 1/3 mile buffer has more to do with protecting "communities" and subdivisions (like Story, Wyo. for example), not individual isolated structures in remote areas - which makes more sense to me.

Again, I am not for any part of this proposal that affects in any way the two Nordic ski areas mentioned above. I know this proposal covers a long time, 20 yrs I believe, but I am not for such extensive clear-cutting even over that time period. That many clear-cut areas and 1/3 mile buffer zones in the whole area would change the mountain from a more natural ecosystem to another significantly man-altered system. I believe most people go to the mountain for the former. This whole proposal appears to be directed by some CEO of some lumber company, and if totally followed would make the south end of the Big Horn National Forest look like it was owned by some lumber company instead of the public - in my opinion.