

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/17/2023 1:20:23 PM

First name: Theresa

Last name: Blazicevich

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Project Managers:

I object to this project for several reasons.

First, all prescribed burning should be stopped. You have not adequately addressed the impacts of smoke from prescribed fires on the health of children and the elderly. In narrow mountain valleys like the Bitterroot Valley, all open burning causes smoke to descend into the valley where the majority of the people live. The burning can potentially affect the short term and long term health of over 40,000 residents and thousands of visitors. We have had to limit outdoor activities year round due to smoke from open burning, prescribed burning, wildfires, wood stoves, etc. This additional burning will only further damage the residents lungs and future health. I object to using tax payer money to cause health damage.

Second, land use planning should be used to limit building in areas subject to uncontrollable wildfires. Tax payer money should not be used to protect buildings in this identified high risk area. If you want to protect these buildings, you would have to cut all the trees and remove significantly more vegetation. Burning is not the answer. You could cut the trees, chip the slash, mow, graze, and use other treatment. People that live in this area should pay for this treatment, not the taxpayers.

Third, a project of this size will disrupt the wildlife of this area. Already, elk, bear, mule deer, Lewis's Woodpeckers, owls, bobcat, mountain lions, and other wildlife are moving into the valley with more development in the mountains. This project will further drive the wildlife out of their habitat and damage the ecosystem. Creating large blocks of woodlots in the mountains will not support wildlife variety and habitat. Wildlife species will be stressed and many species will disappear. You have not adequately addressed these damages.

I am not opposed to tree cutting that is part of a well planned project that does not cause air pollution, damage wildlife habitat, or displace wildlife and people fleeing from poor air quality or increased heavy equipment in the forest.

If the private property owners in this area have created a problem for fighting forest fires, maybe they should pay for the solution and do it without burning and damaging our health and wildlife habitat.