Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/14/2023 4:00:00 AM
First name: Mark
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Title:
Comments: Soda - Baker Fuel Break Project #64706 comments: For a project of over 2000 acres, the minimal information made available to the public is woefully inadequate. And not at all of a timely manner - 2 weeks to comment and virtually no publicity or public notice about such a large project. And no meaningful information. Just mostly opinion. Incomprehensible. The project has a 'categorical exclusion'. What's the category? What are it's parameters? Why should this project be 'excluded' from the normal processes?What is the minimum and the target stems per acre that will remain? There doesn't seem to be any exclusion for old growth or wetland areas.There's no maximum number of truck loads oflumber. And where will it even go? There are no lumber mills for well over 100 miles. You'll be destroying a bona fide source of carbon storage and then adding even more carbon to the atmosphere and environment in doing it! How many miles of new roads will need to be constructed to harvest and then haul the lumber out? And at what cost? Both monetarily and to the wildlife and endangered and at risk species in the area.There's no mention of accommodating endangered and at risk species, which are known to be in the area. Where's the data on fuel breaks? Do they even work? There's evidence that wildfire actually travels faster thru thinned and 'treated' areas. This proposed fuel break is non-linear since some of the roads it follows are wide ranging switchbacks. How often is maintenance required? At what cost? Who pays for it? This whole notion of 'Categorical Exclusion' and 'Conditions Based Management' is a big load of Hooey. It makes the FS judge, jury, and executioner as well as the arresting officer. This is the fox guarding the henhouse. These are 'public lands' and like it or not, the public gets a say. And it shouldn't be just those members of the public who are on their toes and keeping up with the day-to-day and therefore are able to make comments in the woefully inadequate and shrunken time frame you allow. And the scientific analysis and evidence should be available and made public well before any comment period, not after the fact. Science is constantly analyzing the available data and evidence and is open to changing conclusions based on this data and evidence. That's the nature of the beast. The FS is not entitled to picking and choosing it's own science for it's partisan goals. Especially not without meaningful public dialogue. The FS has been awarded and entrusted with the guardianship of public assets. It is not a victorious dictator awarded the spoils. Forest health and wildfire mitigation before the fact are important to me, both in general and also because I live in the area. I don't see the FS relationship to the community and the public at large as necessarily being adversarial. I think it can be a partnership, working together to achieve a worthy goal. But the parties have to be willing. The public is only asking for a seat at the table and to be heard and to have their information and opinions considered. After all, it is 'public' lands. Mark Van Loon, Hamilton MT