

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/23/2023 7:23:18 PM

First name: Mark K.

Last name: Larson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: *The arguments for need of the project are well described in terms of

- oThe evidence of the amount of dead wood, vegetation, etc. that provides increased fuel for a wildfire.

- oThe increased aridity of recent past seasons that has contributed to the increase of fuel load.

Therefore, I believe that this evidence alone justifies use of resources under the HFRA to reduce the fuel load.

*The Forest Service proposed action in 100,000 acres of (1) mechanical harvesting [58,650 acres], (2) mastication [41,000 acres], and (3) reforestation and stocking are actions that I applaud. Although I recognize that the fourth method, prescribed burning, may be necessary in some areas, I cringe at the risk that such burns jump the perimeter and become wildfires. I was visiting our cabin at Ferron Reservoir in 2007 when a prescribed burn jumped the perimeter because conditions changed. The Forest Service did not have sufficient personnel or equipment on hand to handle the change in conditions. As a result, the fire approached within two to three miles of our cabin. I did not save documentation of other prescribed burns that jumped the perimeter, but I know that I saw evidence of other such cases in the past. In short, in case of a prescribed burn, public trust is a little lacking that the Forest Service will have on hand the resources to handle changing conditions.

*When I lived in another state, my home was threatened by wildfires twice, resulting in an evacuation the first time, and almost an evacuation the second time. In the first case, the fire jumped the river below my home. In the second case, the risk of the fire jumping the river became a grave concern. Luckily, firefighters were able to contain that fire well short of the river. These experiences drove home both the need to take care of fire load and the need to control a fire early on. Response to the first fire was slow so that the fire had a head start of two to three hours when resources could have been called in earlier. Response time to the second fire was very quick, so that we did not have to evacuate. In the case of a prescribed burn in the project area, my family's first experience, where the response was delayed, can be compared to a prescribed burn where insufficient personnel are readily available to maintain the perimeter in the event of changing conditions.

*The project plan has not indicated any policy for criteria of where and when prescribed burns might be used. It does not indicate that prescribed burns will be kept any significant distance away from public use areas or cabin areas, etc. Any planned use of prescribed burns seems to lack the transparency that I would like. The plan is to rely on experts to make these decisions. I want the public to have a greater voice in such criteria for use of prescribed burns and their implementation. Can there not be an avenue to allow for some public input for each prescribed burn? There must be a way to do this without causing excessive delays in being able to move forward or not. Please consider readdressing a way to gain public trust by expanding the circle of input of specific concerns, with a way to address any concerns brought up.

*The time that it takes to revegetate, especially to grow trees, after a fire is troubling. Prescribed burns can add to this impact. I recognize evidence in the project area where tree roots provide a lot of stability to slopes, whereas the lack of a good system of intertwining roots allows more erosion and slipping of slopes, posing potential risk to water drainages, wildlife, habitat, and roads, particularly during a wet year such as 1983. I ask that consideration of this type of impact be thoroughly considered.