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Title:

Comments: I am writing as an ordinary citizen, a Nurse Practitioner, a mother, an artist, and a human born when humans numbered approximately 2.5 billion. In 2023, humans numbered approximately 8,045,311,447, over 70 million more than in 2022.

In contrast, we are losing our mature trees on which we depend to remove the carbon dioxide we humans are creating with our exponential growth.

The USDA inventory in 2023 reported 175,000 square miles of old growth and mature trees on federal lands, or just 4.6% of US land mass. On January 5, 2024 MIT in its on line Climate Portal, estimated that it would take over 115,800 square miles of trees " to account for one year of American emissions, but due to climate change we can't count on existing forests to pull our CO2 out of the atmosphere, "...planting trees where they've been lost is often a good idea that will take up some CO2, but a much more efficient thing to do, to have a much larger effect, is to stop cutting down trees...burning and destroying them , releasing carbon at rates that are much higher than what new growth would take up"

Climate change is now a threat to all life on earth, and we must do everything possible to offset the carbon emissions. The very least we can do is end the destruction of trees-trees that not only consume carbon, but provide shade, protect our water sheds, shelter for wildlife, and solace for us humans. Wood products can be replaced with other products that do not add to global warming-such as hemp, & so many other options-cutting down trees especially those on public land is a misuse of a critical resource, contributes to expensive life threatening climate change, and according to all the reliable scientific evidence is a betrayal of the public interest, and public good.

Here in Bozeman we have witnessed many projects all focused on logging of mature and old growth forests with plumes of smoke as piles of wood are burned. The lie is the logging is "forest health" or to protect our water shed. Instead, what we have is now bare hillsides, without shade to cool the landscape's snowpack and slow the spring runoff on which we depend. By July, plant life in these plundered landscapes is dry, & brittle -plant life that cannot thrive without the shade provided by trees is the fuel for fire.

Please, designate all the wilderness study areas as wilderness- it is all we have left and because of climate change we should not expect more-perhaps never. Our forests are wonders, beyond anything we humans are capable of creating.

Thank you for listening and studying the need to preserve our forests.

Addendum:

Finally, because in MT politicians like to say cutting down forests is necessary for wildfire prevention, I want to note that humans are the #1 cause of wildfires, limiting humans in wilderness areas would be the #1 way to reduce wildfire risk. The Forest Service in Bozeman instead allows motorbikes almost everywhere most days of the week. Foot trails are subject to groups of loud diesel spewing motorcycles, despite families, dogs, horses, mountain bikes, and hikers trying to navigate them.