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Comments: I am writing to express my strong support for the Katkee Fuels Project based on the assessment of increased fire danger, existing threats posed by neglected and unmanaged forests, and the potential benefits outlined in the project proposal. The urgency to address these concerns is evident, and the project appears to be a justified and necessary measure to protect local communities and private landowners. The identification of neglected and unmanaged forest areas as potential fire hazards highlights the importance of proactive intervention. By implementing the Katkee Fuels Project, not only will the fire danger be mitigated, but the project will also contribute to the overall well-being of the ecosystem and its surroundings.

Moreover, the recent creation and upkeep of trails in the vicinity are commendable efforts that will enhance the positive user experience and aesthetic value of the area and the fuels project will increase the positive aesthetic value that trails users experience. The improved trails will not only benefit recreational users but also contribute to the overall conservation of the environment. One significant aspect that deserves attention is how the Katkee Fuels Project is expected to increase the value of the trails. The reduction in fuels will not only enhance the safety of the trails but also improve the overall experience for trail users. This increase in trail value further underscores the positive impact that the project will have on both recreational opportunities and the local community's appreciation of the natural environment.

It is crucial to note, however, that recent fires in Boundary County have revealed the vulnerability of old growth stands to fire and post-fire insect outbreaks. Despite significant financial and resource investments, it has become evident that these stands are not inherently resistant to such disturbances. Consequently, the notion of setting aside stands for recruitment potential old growth (RPOG) should be reevaluated in light of this new understanding.

The scientific approach should guide the assessment of stands rather than adhering to predetermined leave tree per acre criteria based on politics and emotion. The experience with partial cuts and shelter wood prescriptions in the recent fires underscores the need for a more rigorous evaluation method that prioritizes ecological resilience and resistance to fire and insect outbreaks.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support the Katkee Fuels Project and appreciate the effort to address fire dangers, enhance recreational opportunities, increase trail value, and contribute to wildlife conservation. I urge a thorough reassessment of the old growth stands within the project area, aligning with a scientific approach that prioritizes resilience and resistance to disturbances as the silvicultural prescriptions contradict itself by claiming old growth is resistant to disturbance while admitting recent fires caused significant mortality and post fire insect mortality even from a low intensity fire. If fire reduction and resiliency is truly the goal managing more stands, harvesting more timber, and transitioning more of the forest into an early successional stage could accomplish the goal.