Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/1/2024 6:00:00 AM
First name: Owen
Last name:
Organization:
Title:
Comments: [External Email]Lolo Plan Revision team

Good evening,

I would like to start by saying thank you to national forest and all the people who help make these lands accessible to the public. Lolo National Forest is one of the most magnificent forests in all of the United States and it is a privilege to have spent many great times there. As a lover of the forest, I would like to offer hope that the fungal kindom be represented in the updated forest plan. Fungi preform many critical ecological functions that keep a forest healthy and thriving.

Many fungal species act as the ecosystem's recyclers, breaking down complex organic matter and returning essential nutrients to the soil, fueling future plant growth. Additionally, many fungi form mycorrhizal associations with trees, essentially becoming extensions of their root systems. This vital partnership enhances nutrient and water uptake, promoting tree health and resilience. Conserving fungal diversity is crucial for maintaining robust forest ecosystems capable of adapting to environmental pressures. Understanding and protecting these hidden players is key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of our forests.

Our understanding of fungal diversity is constantly evolving and we are constantly learning that many species of fungi in the forests around us are actually quite unique. While some fungal species are widespread and readily identifiable, a significant portion exhibit high levels of endemism, meaning they exist in very specific habitats or geographic regions. This hidden biodiversity plays a vital role in ecosystem function, and its loss due to habitat degradation or climate change could have cascading effects on forest health.

In conclusion, I hope that the Lolo National Forest Service considers including fungi in the Land Management Plan revisions.