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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a member of an adjacent property {{Sand Creek Country Club) These comments are my own thoughts do not represent the opinion of the remainder of our organization.Being an outdoor enthusiast, I spend as much time as possible outdoors and I have a number of comments on the project which I will try to truncate as best as I am able. There is no question that the fuel supply on the Forest floor has increased over time and especially since the Atlas storm a number of years ago. It seemed inevitable that some intervention would be forth coming. I think we all fear the threat of fire and with the amount of fuel on the forest floor an out of control lightening or human-caused fire could burn with an intensity that could not only take down foliage and structures but could scar the soil and limit regeneration of the environment.This isn't a term paper so I will get to the nuts and bolts of the comments.Regarding:Pine thinning-The term harvest is used for mechanical thinning, but a specific harvest prescription (as is mentioned in Past management section) for the different areas be thinned is difficult to find. There are a lot of vague terms used in describing what will be done (like variable, incremental, excessive, sufficient, relatively, etc.). Presently, with those terms it isn't clear how much thinning will actually take place in the different areas. It would seem that preservation of as many mature trees as possible would be a high priority. With the old growth areas, preservation of all should a very high priority.There is mentioned a possibility of winch assisted or tethered logging which is described as new to the Black Hills. With a lot of this project involving step slope harvesting, is this equipment now owned and operated by local logging companies or is potential funding for this type of steep slope logging going to be contracted to outside entities from other states with no stake in preserving beauty of the area? In looking at what can be seen in on-line videos, this type of steep slope logging appears to be most effective with clear cutting areas, which this project doesn't involve. Also this project area encompasses what is referred to on map and locally as the grand canyon and it would appear that the winch assist logging could potentially damage a lot of the rock outcroppings and scar landscape, contributing to loss of the local beauty.How is the cut material that isn't sold handled as the project moves along? Is it addressed as an area is thinned or does it accumulate over the years of the project and get addressed at the end? Could that be a problem if funding has lapsed?Prescribed Fire-This certainly may be necessary in some areas and is quite frequently used. Very close contact between the entities involved with managing it and the involved adjacent property representative is critical. We have very involved fire volunteers for our entity, but many are not around during the winter. If burns are to take place, our representative on site locally that day will need to be notified.Road Issues-Limited new temporary roads may be necessary. Will these then be blocked off where the new access was provided once the project is over and how? With the explosion of off-road motorized vehicles in the area, will there be attempts for legal allowances or wrangling for the same, for these vehicles to use roads that previously weren't there, or will these new roads be allowed to return to their natural state?Our entity runs along Sand Creek Road which is heavily used all year long, but especially in the summer months. Will this road be a major conduit to and from the project or are there plans to try and keep the logging trucks and other heavy equipment traffic on less congested gravel roads? If Sand Creek road is considered a major conduit, is the assistance with road maintenance part of the project and has one of the agencies involved with the project provided assurance that the new bridges put in a few years ago can handle multiple-year, extensive use by fully loaded logging trucks?Dugout Gulch botanical area- Trail and rare plant habitatIt appears that there are plans to try and protect his area. With the interagency involvement in the project, is there a recent report from a botanist from the Forest Service that can clearly delineate that the planned activities surrounding these areas are the best way to protect them? Also, there are substantial areas in Dugout Gulch area of non native invasive plants such as Buckthorn that could also threaten these botanical and rare plant habitat areas. Are there plans to try to identify and treat these and other invasive plants if they are encountered? The seeds from these plants could easily be spread up and down the roadways by vehicles that are operating through and over these plants.Northern Goshawk-It appears there are plans to avoid much logging activity in these areas during the breeding season. With the thinning that will take place at other times of the year, has a wildlife biologist with the Forest Service reviewed the project plan for this area and surmised that the tree removal and environment

modification won't adversely affect the food chain the goshawk requires to survive and remain in the area. Sand Creek-Our entity, which is Sand Creek Country Club (SCCC) exists because of that creek. There are many different opinions about almost every little thing within our eclectic group, but we all are united on our love for that creek. Since it is the main endpoint of the water runoff from the North Sand Project, everything that goes on in the project will ultimately impact the creek in some way or other. No one can accurately predict what precipitation forms or amount will occur over the course of this multiyear project, but we would certainly hope that an interagency hydrologist would look over all the disruption that will occur to the foliage, soil, landscape, roadways, etc over this time and try to assure us that this will not have a negative impact on the pristine water that is SandCreek. This entire area is a regional treasure. Thank you for the invitation to comment, and thank you for making it your livelihoods to try and navigate nature's beauty through an ever increasing discordant world.