Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/23/2024 11:56:39 PM
First name: Diane
Last name: Adams
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I am writing to object to several elements included in the preferred alternative of the Pole Creek Vegetation Management Plan. Although multiple changes were made to the timber harvest and thinning units within the Pole Creek Nordic area since the original draft, several were left in the plan that will have a significant impact on winter recreation. Also, it appears that numerous harvest units in the Powder Pass 449 area were added.

Harvest units 11 and 12 are along the west side of the Pole Creek Nordic area. Unit 12 is listed as 57 acres and will significantly affect snow accumulation in that area. There is already a problem with wind scouring the trails along the wet meadow on that branch of Pole Creek. These two harvest units will exacerbate the problem.

Harvest unit 20, along the ungroomed ski trail near the Pole Creek Cabin, apparently has two segments. It is listed as only 25 acres, but seems to be much larger than Unit 19, for example, listed as 22 acres. Unit 20 will also have an impact on snow accumulation, even with the narrow buffer that is proposed.

The Pole Creek Nordic Area should receive some type of Forest Service designation as a winter recreation area. Considering the number of people who cross-country ski and snowshoe there, as well as their impact on the local economy, there ought to be some recognition of the area's contribution to the Bighorn Forest.

Sheep Mountain Road also has quite a bit of winter use by both cross-country skiers and snowmobilers. Harvest units 64 and 65 both intersect this road, with no buffer. Unit 65 appears to be quite large, possibly over 100 acres (this is in comparison with Unit 23, listed as 123 acres). This, too, will have a significant impact on snow accumulation and winter recreation.

Cloud Peak Skyway, a state scenic byway, gets a significant amount of tourist traffic. The preferred alternative includes a surprising number of regeneration harvests on both sides of the road (Units 56, 56A, 57A and 60). These units are all right next to one another and will have a substantial cumulative visual impact on the highway.

I am encouraged by the positive changes that were made in the Pole Creek Nordic Area for the vegetation management plan. However, I hope the issues outlined here can be addressed before it becomes final.