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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Regarding the proposed "Cooke City Fuels and Forest Health Project" I have a number of comments and concerns. May I preface them by noting that our family has owned a quarter section of land at Cooke Pass/Coulter Pass for more than 90-years. Many of our family, including my 101-year-old mother, have been full time or part year residents here for all of that time. My grandparents, who purchased this land, are now gone but three of their children are still here with us. I am one of 58 cousins, some of which are multimillionaires and quite influential, and we all consider Cooke City our home. We love it - and we especially love its forests, its mountains, its wildlife and its peace and quiet. Your proposed plan would threaten all of these.

Your plan suggests three levels of treatment of our forests - and we do consider them ours, as US taxpayers and as long time residents. These are Commercial Logging, Mechanical Treatment and Hand Fuels Treatment. I have reviewed the pictures from your public presentation and I detect scant differences between these treatments. Permit me to address these individually.

Commercial Logging / Tractor (Ground Based) Harvest: We are adamantly and irrevocably opposed to any commercial logging in the area of the US 212 highway and in the Soda Butte Creek valley. This highway and this valley are one of only five approaches to Yellowstone National Park. As such they are literally the setting for what is universally acclaimed to be the crown jewel in our National Park system.

Unit 110 is immediately adjacent to the home of our cousin, Rilla L. Hawkins. Removal of the timber between her house and Highway 212 will not only be extremely unsightly but will expose her to an unacceptable increase in highway noise - and possibly intruder access.

Similar issues relate to Unit 63, which is immediately east and southeast of Rilla's home - lying between the Kersey Lake Road and Highway 212. Commercial harvesting of that area would be extremely unsightly and is adjacent to the Chief Joseph Highway marker and turn-out. In addition access would have to cross our family property.

With regard to Units 41, 42, 44 and 45, south of Cooke City and up Woody Gulch, this is adjacent to the home of another cousin, Rob Vance. While this may be high value timber removing it will almost certainly leave an unsightly mess and will not appreciably enhance the safety of Cooke City. Realistically fires almost always come from the west, driven by the dominant winds, and not from the south.

Units 51, 52, 53, and 58 line the south side of Highway 212 between Cooke City and Cooke Pass/Coulter Pass. Their removal would be extremely unsightly and would be of very dubious value in protecting Cooke City from fire - as they are east of Cooke City. Those of us who live here know that winds here almost never come from the east.

Mechanical Treatment: Your own photographs show very little difference between this and commercial logging. As a minimum we feel that any "Mechanical Treatment" should be kept to areas far, far (at least a mile) from human habitation and from sight of Highway 212. In particular we are concerned with Units 100 and 114, which are behind (i.e., south of) the homes of three of our cousins of the Carrol Jackson Grover family. This will increase their homes to a much increased risk of mudslides, as that area is on a steep slope. In addition your only access to that area would be across our property - and you will not receive permission to do that.

We are also concerned about Units 59, 39 and 40, for similar reasons.

Hand Fuels Treatment: Once again your own photographs show very little difference between this and Mechanical Treatment. It gives the appearance of changing a virgin forest into something resembling an ill-kept city park. To us this is unimaginable! Its effect on the wildlife we love would be catastrophic. These treatments also should be kept to areas far, far (at least a mile) from human habitation and from sight of Highway 212. With particular reference to Units 32 A, B, C, and D, as well as Units 33 A, B, and D, and 23, these units are only accessible by crossing our property - and you will not receive permission to do that. Those units are immediately adjacent to the homes of no less than four of our cousins and a 101-year-old aunt who has lived here for ninety plus years!

In summary we feel that the Project the Forest Services proposes is of very hypothetical benefit and of tremendous immediate cost - most especially to those of us who live here - and so we are firmly opposed to it.