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First name: Coby

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Organization: Jackson County

Title: Commissioner

Comments: Hello,

Jackson County firmly supports the healthy stewardship of all of our nation's forests. However, we do feel that each forest and region should be handled in a manner that takes into account the unique variables in each situation. Using our forests as examples, the Medicine Bow and Routt National Forests (including the surrounding Wilderness areas) have had substantial wildfires over the past twenty years. Our dry climate does not allow for an effective decaying process, so wildfires are a natural part of the forest's health. These fires are harmful to many facets of the environment and our lives. We'd like to propose that there are situations where timber management is an effective tool, when planned appropriately.

Our issues arose when the pine beetle infestation killed large swathes of our trees. Since these trees take an immense amount of time to decompose, they are much more likely to blow over or burn. In either scenario, they create a forest floor that is much more likely to burn again. During these fires, we see ecosystems for wildlife destroyed, watersheds are drastically altered, and the air quality in the region diminishes. Once the forest floor stabilizes, the new growth is then tightly clustered, which stunts the growth of the trees and causes more management issues.

We are not advocating for the deforestation of our region, but rather that we find a healthy balance. Proper timber management has been a successful tool for centuries. It allows for a healthier density of trees, less charred landscapes, consistent ecosystems, and sustainable products for our economy. In a world that is trying to transition away from fossil fuels, it would be a shame to continue to watch our renewable resource (wood) continue to burn and be wasted. Beyond this waste, taxpayers spend absurd amounts of money fighting the fires. These fires then affect our insurance rates and increase the cost of living in rural areas. Please be open-minded to allowing forest management to be a utilized tool in the regions that need it.