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Comments: I am submitting comment to register my concern and dissent toward the Lower North-South Vegetation Management project, demand that this project be put though fair due process, and recommend against issuing permits for this logging project.

This project represents the largest potential logging operation in Colorado history, totaling 116,000 acres, including 18,500 acres in protected roadless areas. Qualified experts have raised concerns of "strongly adverse impacts" from this project. These concerns are shared by many Colorado environmental groups, such as the Center for Biological Diversity, Environment Colorado, Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, and various others. These adverse impacts include the compromise of soil and watershed systems, as well as impact on habitat for multiple species, including crucial habitat for three species listed as threatened by the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, disturbance caused by this project would risk creating opportunities for the introduction and spread of noxious weeds, some species of which may actually increase the spread of wildfire according to studies.

These risks are not sufficiently offset by the supposed benefit of wildfire fuel reduction. In fact, a significant and growing body of evidence suggests that such "fuel reduction" efforts do not actually reduce the risk of wildfire, aside from pruning within 100 ft of structures. Such thinning efforts actually may have the uninterested consequence of causing heating and dying in the understory, which can cause fires to ignite more easily and burn more intensely.

Despite well founded concerns about adverse impacts and evidence that the fuel reduction strategies of this project may be ineffective, I am disturbed to learn that officials are attempting to expedite the approval process for this project by invoking an "emergency action" authorization. This modified "emergency" timeline bypasses an objection period that allows advocates to pause or halt damaging projects and skips steps in the normal process required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

Especially considering the lack of information available about the project in the public media on the front range, it is exceptionally inappropriate to force this project through an expedited timeline. Given the serious concerns about impacts on soil, water systems and habitat and the lack of evidence that fuel reduction efforts would actually be effective at protecting communities from wildfire, this project appears to be a thinly veiled grab at public resources by the logging industry. I would have trouble overstating my urge that the South Platte Ranger District reconsider or altogether halt this project. There is no need to add urgency to the approval to this project - what is urgent is protecting the ecosystems that our communities ultimately depend on and owe their well-being to.