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Organization:

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Comments: I urge the Forest Service (FS) to choose Alternative 3, the "No Action in the Wilderness Alternative," for the Fernberg Corridor Landscape Management Project for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

The project (Alternative 2 in particular) would burn nearly 84,000 acres within the BWCAW. Fire is certainly a normal recurring process within the BWCAW, but the FS must let the Wilderness burn on its terms without human intervention. Such is the definition and spirit of Wilderness. For nearly four decades now, the FS has promised to let lightning-ignited fires burn within the Wilderness; had it done so, a controlled, human-started burn would be unnecessary. Let natural lightning-caused fires occur within the Wilderness unhindered: They will do their part for the ecosystem.

Remarkably, the draft environmental analysis (EA) doesn't detail whether the FS would let natural fires burn in the BWCAW if the FS proceeds with its preferred alternative, nor when or how it would permit them. It merely vaguely states that letting natural fires burn is one of the project's purposes. Please revise the EA and cure this defect. The public deserves details -- clear, specific language on all these points.

Then there is the fundamental problem with this proposal: Human-managed fires are incompatible with Wilderness. Wilderness is self-willed land. We set it aside to take care of itself and so that we would approach it on its terms, not ours, in a spirit of humility. The FS's "desired conditions" and "desired outcomes" have no place there. The only outcome is freedom for the land; the only means is self-restraint. And chainsaws and helicopters -- potential tools for this project -- obviously violate the Wilderness Act of 1964 and cannot be used in the BWCAW.

I support Alternative 3, the "No Action in the Wilderness Alternative." Controlled burns are fine outside of Wilderness, but please leave the BWCAW to start and control fires on its own.

Sincerely,

Jordan Vaughan