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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Regarding the East Valley Fuels Reduction Project #64492

April

6, 2025

Dear Ranger Dowling,

I have studied materials and would like to submit these comments to the public record. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

As a former resident and frequent visitor to the Flathead valley I am concerned about many issues in the proposed plan. A huge concern of mine is preservation of the "Viewshed"; The Swan Front is iconic and should not be visually compromised.

I advocate for no "thinning" in the proposed 2,541 acres and no logging of old growth habitat. No logging of old growth habitat. None. The time has long since past when you should even consider destroying the minimal old growth habitats that survive.

I advocate for no industrial impacts in the 109 acres of Inventoried Roadless Area targeted in the project. Roadless areas, like old growth habitat should be off limits due to their scarcity.

No new roads, and no re-opened roads, please. Furthermore, I would advocate that funds should be committed to rehabilitating existing "closed" roads in the project area to decrease, or eliminate, motor traffic. Rehabilitation of ineffective road closures that persist will support wildlife in general, and in particular will support the grizzly bear population. "There are no temporary roads from wildlife's perspective"; a Sara Johnson quote I agree with. Please work in collaboration with the USFWS regarding all listed ESA species in the project area.

I advocate for full protection of the 135 acres of streamside zones identified in the project. These habitats are critical for wildlife and clean water. As a hiker, I value the opportunity to explore areas and spend time in nature. Stream sedimentation is an undesirable impact and should be avoided. Visitors to the Flathead Valley spend a lot of money in the economy, and visitors want to experience accessible hiking trails. Please preserve the look and feel, as well as the soundscape of the Swan Front.

Finally, I believe the plan for East Valley Fuels Reduction Project (#64492) has significant issues and request that you prepare an Environmental Assessment. The public needs to see that assessment and have the opportunity to comment on the Draft EA. I see no justification for a Categorical Exclusion in this matter. Please follow the Forest Plan and all federal environmental laws.

Sincerely yours, Mary Beth Emerton