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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Supervisor,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hyalite Cottonwood Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. I support the project's intent to reduce wildfire risk, protect Bozeman's watershed, and improve ecosystem resilience. As a passionate member of the Gallatin Valley recreation community, I strongly encourage the Forest Service to incorporate recreation access and trail planning into the scope of this work-now and for the future. The Hyalite and Cottonwood drainages are among the most cherished and utilized trail networks in southwest Montana, and maintaining their integrity is essential to our region's quality of life.

I respectfully request that the Forest Service consider the following in support of responsible trail development:

*Preserve Existing Trails: Ensure current trail infrastructure is protected during fuels reduction activities. If damage occurs, prioritize restoration of trail corridors for continued public use.

*Plan for Future Access: Use this opportunity to identify areas suitable for thoughtfully designed new trails in recently treated areas, particularly where thinning creates openings in the forest.

*Address Overcrowding: Bozeman's existing trail system is under strain from growing use. Strategic trail expansion in this project area could help alleviate pressure on overused systems.

*Partner with Local Groups: Collaborate with local organizations like the Southwest Montana Mountain Bike Association (SWMMA) to identify high-priority routes and co-develop sustainable trail plans.

*Maximize Shared Benefits: Trails and wildfire mitigation are not mutually exclusive-responsible trail development can coexist with fire-resilient landscapes and even facilitate fire management access.

Closing Thoughts:

This project represents a rare and timely opportunity to align landscape resilience with public access. By planning for the long-term recreational value of this area-while fulfilling the urgent need for fire mitigation-the Forest Service can ensure this high-use landscape continues to serve the community in a safe, sustainable way. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to stewardship of our public lands.