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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Subject: Comment on "Upper Bunk" Project Proposal - Request for Collaboration and Transparency

Dear Kootenai National Forest Team,

I am writing to provide comments on the proposed "Upper Bunk" project in the Yaak Valley. After reviewing the limited information currently available, I have significant concerns about the lack of project detail, the absence of public collaboration, and the potential ecological impacts of large-scale commercial logging within critical habitat.

First, I am concerned that this proposal has been advanced without the collaborative process required under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. Local groups such as the Yaak Valley Forest Council (YVFC) specifically requested engagement as early as July, yet it appears that collaboration has not taken place. Public participation and transparency are essential for building trust and ensuring that project objectives align with ecological and community needs.

Second, given that many of the proposed units are adjacent to private property, it is unclear whether Good Neighbor Authority opportunities have been discussed with local landowners. Coordination here would help ensure consistency in management objectives, fuel reduction strategies, and wildfire resilience across property boundaries.

Third, more detailed information is needed regarding:

- *Which species and size classes are being targeted for treatment.

- *How the project will affect grizzly bear recovery and other sensitive wildlife.

- *Plans for weed control, slash management, and soil protection to mitigate the effects of mechanized logging and clearcutting.

- *Baseline data on fuel loading, stocking levels, basal area, and desired future conditions, as guided by the Forest Plan and best available science.

I strongly support the request for a field trip to review proposed units on the ground before further action is taken. Direct observation and discussion would provide the transparency and context necessary for meaningful public input.

Lastly, while reducing wildfire risk is an important goal, the most effective and immediate strategy remains home hardening and defensible space. I encourage the Forest Service to prioritize these community-level efforts in tandem with any landscape treatments.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I respectfully request that the comment period be extended to allow for adequate public review and collaboration on this project.

Sincerely,

Shea Singletary