

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/16/2026 4:43:39 AM

First name: Stephanie

Last name: kalish

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Flathead National Forest proposed logging and forest restoration project near the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.

I thank District Ranger Rob Davies for requesting public comment on this important proposal, noting that it is no longer required by law (sadly).

I attended the public meeting for the Bear Creek/Palmer proposed logging project and the attendance was huge - maybe 70 plus public members. We appreciated the chance to voice concerns and get clarification on the steps of the proposal that are in their infancy. Cliff Coldridge (?) was seemingly transparent and had the good foresight to have forestry specialists at each table to give their best available information on topics such as pests, fish biologist, wildlife biologist, forest engineer, etc.

I suggest that your agency conduct a similar format to the Bear Creek/Palmer project as it really gave a lot of people a good chance to hear many sides, scientific as well as administrative etc. More questions will no doubt come from each session. More maps will be provided in April as they progress and refine every step of the way. People of Jardine and Gardiner and the wildlife and wilderness are really in the cross hairs, not to mention Yellowstone National Park and the public to which it belongs to forever. Yes they had many good informative points on their initial assessment but need to get back to the drawing board to make this work for all aspects. Monitoring and compliance will really need to be stepped up as well as a BMP effectiveness review with an interdisciplinary team of experts (well and adequately resourced and not from the logging industry!).

I'm concerned that the project may impact wilderness, roadless characteristics, aquatic habitats and other values.

This needs careful expertise to ensure the project protects roadless areas, recommended wilderness, and a wild and scenic river corridor.

Please consider including the following points in your comments.

I ask that the Forest Service continue to offer a public meeting and site tours, and provide photos depicting examples of the proposed treatment types, when the draft environmental assessment (EA) is released. That is what was done for the 14 January public meeting at Gardiner at the Forever Yellowstone facility. Maps and photos and experts explaining and answering questions and writing down the public's questions to action.

The EA needs to provide justification for the commercial treatments proposed in inventoried roadless areas (IRAs). The EA is required to describe in detail how all treatments in IRAs will maintain or improve roadless area characteristics.

The whitebark pine restoration should utilize hand tools and be conducted via foot and stock access only as currently required by the Flathead National Forest Plan, not helicopters.

The EA should describe how the proposed project will, or will not, impact the "outstanding remarkable values" associated with the affected stretch of the Middle Fork of the Flathead: fisheries, geology, water quality, wildlife, recreation, scenery, history, and ethnography and what measures will be included to protect these values.

I oppose new road construction. Even roads made "inaccessible" still cause long-term sedimentation and aquatic habitat degradation and facilitate legal and illegal access that degrades secure wildlife habitat. Any roads that must be built should be "obliterated" afterward.

The treatment design and location needs to consider potential impact on wildlife connectivity along Highway 2. Ongoing monitoring and compliance with a Best Practice effectiveness review with an interdisciplinary team of experts from all fields with a risk management plan reviewed at every step to address issues that arise from the monitoring and compliance program. Climate change certainly needs to be included in the Risk Assessment for precautionary principles to be adhered to.

I look forward to hearing more going forward. I am relieved that this project is not rushing in haste. More funds are required to keep your agency strong and effective in protecting wilderness and wildlife. I will ask my representative to increase funding for your important agency.

Kind regards and thanks again for allowing the public to be involved.

Stephanie