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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear, USDA Forest Service U.S. Department of Agriculture

I am writing about my concern about the Pilgrim Creek Timber Sale Project. This project seems a bit too large to me. The project plans to contain 36,602 acres in Sanders County, Montana. Also, there was 4 miles of total proposed road to be built during the project, and a perimeter of 6,950 acres have been prescribed for burning. There is also some new tree planting being done, but the amount is so small compared to the amount that is being clear cut so it hardly makes any difference.

Trees are very important for the local ecosystems as well as the earth as a whole. They are good for the local environment because their roots hold in the soil and prevent runoff into the streams which ultimately results in water pollution. Also, the roots prevent soil erosion which is bad because the topsoil is very rich in nutrients, so when it is lost the plants on the forest floor can't grow as well. Also, erosion can release carbon that is stored in the soil which contributes to global warming. Finally, the likely most well-known reason trees are beneficial is that they intake carbon dioxide straight from the atmosphere. This is like a natural air filter. The more trees we have on the earth's surface, the more photosynthesis will take place which reduces the greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. The roads involved in this project also aren't very good for the ecosystem. The road isn't very good for native species to the area such as Bears, Gray wolves, and Mule Deer. Roads serve as boundaries for the wildlife, especially smaller forms of wildlife like insects and small mammals. The boundaries also have the potential to disrupt migration paths of mammals as well.

Finally, I believe that the prescribed burns may be unnecessary. At least to the extent being done in this project. This project is proposing for a perimeter of 6,950 acres, which is an immense amount considering all of the area within that perimeter. However, there is an alternative to this. Although it is more expensive, selective cutting could be done. There are several benefits to selective cutting including the trees cut will still be able to be used for the timber industry. Also, the best trees to be logged can be selected so the best quality wood can be used. Also, this benefits the forest because thinning out the tree cover in a forest makes it have less of a risk to be burned by a forest fire. Less fuels on the ground means the fire will spread much slower if any at all, making it easier to manage by firefighters. This is essentially a preventative measure to reduce the risk of a high intensity wildfire. A thinner forest is certainly better than no forest at all. Also, the native species in the forest will still be able to thrive in the forest if it has been selectively cut.

It is a sad reality that we must face that trees need to be cut down. We need them for lumber, construction, furniture, and other things. It is a very versatile material that everyone has the right to use. All in all, I think this project is a good idea, it just needs a few changes. The trees are a precious resource we have so I believe we should limit our cutting to selective cutting, and plant more acreage of trees to account for the trees being cut down, so we can keep this a sustainable operation. Thank you for your time and consideration, and good luck on the project.

-Justin Nicholls