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First name: Elena

Last name: Tillman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Flat Tail Project.

I am deeply concerned about the proposed treatment of 1,451 acres of National Forest lands, including 903 acres of commercial harvest and the construction or reconstruction of approximately 19.5 miles of roads.

I understand the Forest Service's concerns about wildfire and insect and disease risk. But an emergency designation should not become a shortcut for removing mature and healthy forests. Cutting trees is not synonymous with protecting forests.

Forests are not simply fuel. They are living ecosystems that provide wildlife habitat, shade streams, stabilize soils, store carbon, retain moisture, and support the ecological resilience that can help forests withstand drought, fire, and climate change. Large openings created by commercial harvest can fragment habitat, increase edge effects, disturb wildlife, and introduce additional roads and human impacts into an already valuable landscape.

I am particularly concerned that the project would create three openings larger than 40 acres. Those are not insignificant disturbances. Before approving this project, the Forest Service should demonstrate that these large-scale commercial treatments-and the associated road construction-are actually necessary and will produce measurable ecological benefits that outweigh their impacts.

I also question whether a project of this scale and permanence should receive a Finding of No Significant Impact. The absence of significant impacts should not be presumed simply because a project is labeled an emergency.

The Kootenai National Forest belongs to all of us. Please protect its mature trees, connected habitat, wildlife, clean water, and natural resilience. I respectfully ask the Forest Service to reconsider the scale of commercial logging and road construction proposed under the Flat Tail Project and to prioritize treatments that genuinely protect communities and forest ecosystems without unnecessarily sacrificing the forests we are supposed to steward.