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First name: Rita
Last name: Lemkuil
Organization:
Title:
Comments:
Subject: Scoping Comments and Objection to Use of Categorical Exclusion - Fridley Foothills Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project (#331238)
To Yellowstone District Ranger Zachary Fisher:
I am submitting these comments regarding the Fridley Foothills Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project and the Forest Service's stated intent to proceed under a Categorical Exclusion authority.
I am disappointed to see that the agency continues to advance this project under a categorical exclusion DESPITE concerns that have ALREADY been PUBLICLY VOICED regarding the scope, intensity, and potential impacts of the proposed activities.
The project description includes vegetation management, fuels reduction, non-commercial mechanical treatments, hand treatments, and commercial timber harvest across a large landscape within and adjacent to the wildland-urban interface. These are not minor actions. IT'S ALL A LIE!!! The scale and complexity of the proposal warrant meaningful environmental review and public scrutiny.
I object to any attempt to use a categorical exclusion as a substitute for a thorough examination of environmental effects. The public deserves a clear explanation of how the agency determined that the proposed activities qualify for streamlined review and how potential impacts to wildlife, habitat connectivity, old and mature forest characteristics, watershed function, recreation values, scenic resources, and cumulative effects have been evaluated.
The notice repeatedly references forest health, insect and disease concerns, and hazardous fuels reduction. However, simply invoking these objectives does not eliminate the need to demonstrate that the specific proposed actions are appropriate, scientifically justified, and consistent with applicable environmental protections. The record should clearly establish why commercial harvest is necessary, what alternatives were considered, and how the agency determined that the project will achieve its stated objectives without causing significant adverse effects.
I also request that the Forest Service fully disclose: * The acreage proposed for each treatment type. * The location and extent of commercial harvest units. * The anticipated effects on wildlife species and habitat. * The cumulative effects of this project when considered alongside past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the project area. * Any extraordinary circumstances that were evaluated and the basis for determining that a categorical exclusion remains appropriate.
Please include these comments in the administrative record and consider them a formal objection to reliance on a categorical exclusion unless the agency can demonstrate, with supporting evidence, that the proposal satisfies all applicable legal and environmental requirements.
The public has a right to transparent decision-making, and projects of this scale deserve a level of analysis proportional to their potential impacts.
Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,
Rita