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Comments:

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Supervisor Lannom,

The PFC has reviewed the DEIS for the Middle Fork Weiser River Restoration Project. In general, we find Alternative Two to most closely align with the PFC Recommendations Report submitted on August 20, 2014. The members conclude that the alternative can be improved by addressing the topics below in the FEIS:

Vegetation Treatments in PVGs 6-11

*The Coalition supports vegetation treatments in the higher level PVGs, specifically the acres treated by the Free Thin-Patch Cut-Modified Shelterwood prescription, when there is an ecological or fuels management benefit.

*In order to document the ecological benefit, the FEIS should include references to recent research that characterizes patch and pattern¹. Since quantitative historical data may not be available, we encourage incorporating qualitative descriptions of differences between historical and current landscape pattern. Interdisciplinary Team presentations to the PFC that compared historical and recent aerial photography are a reasonable source for the description of qualitative differences.

*Alternative Two as proposed would potentially change 25% of suitable lynx habitat to an unsuitable condition. The Coalition supports incorporating additional treatments proposed in Alternative 4 that would affect up to 30% of the source lynx habitat. Priority treatments from Alternative 4 are those which address restoration of whitebark pine, aspen, or create fuel breaks to reduce hazard. The forthcoming designation of the Tamarack Resort WUI² by Adams County is an important factor to consider in the selection of acres for treatment to create fuel breaks.

*We further recommend that the FEIS acknowledge that the effectiveness of the treatments in these Potential Vegetation Groups will be evaluated as part of the CFLRP Ecological Indicator.

Elk Security Areas

*We recommend that the selected alternative include mitigation actions to offset losses to elk security.

*In addition, include elements from Alternative 3 that would expand the spatial distribution of elk security areas in the project area, even if the patches created are less than 250 acres.

The Payette Forest Coalition appreciates the work of the Interdisciplinary Team on the design and analysis of the project. We look forward to successful implementation and monitoring.

¹ Hessburg, PF et al, Restoring fire-prone Inland Pacific landscapes: seven core principles, Landscape Ecology, Volume 30, Issue 10, pp 1805-1835.

² Tamarack WUI General Description: the lands lying east of the 218 Road (Jungle Creek Primary) to the Adams County line, then proceeding south to the Mica Ridge area. Exact boundary will be defined at the Adams County Fire Mitigation Plan meeting on April 7, 2016.