Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/22/2018 11:00:00 AM
First name: Suzanne
Last name: Vernon
Organization:
Title:
Comments: November 22, 2018

To: Flathead National Forest Swan Lake Ranger District 200 Ranger Station Road Bigfork, MT 59911

Re: Mid Swan Restoration Plan, Public Comment To Whom It May Concern:

Please add my name to your mailing list. Please also accept this comment regarding the Mid Swan Restoration Plan.

Last week I learned that the comment period has been extended to December 24, 2018. Because of that, I am drafting other in-depth comments with specific references to proposals in named drainages. I hope to mail these comments to you in early December.

I have read briefly the scoping document for the Mid Swan Restoration Plan. I am concerned about the proposed new roads -- some 60 miles -- and the accompanying thinning and logging projects. My initial reaction is that the miles of new roads will cause excessive erosion, they will be expensive to maintain; and culverts will wash out as they have at the higher elevations in the past (affecting fisheries, for example, in North Lost Creek).

In addition, the thinning projects the Forest has proposed will disrupt lynx and grizzly habitat, just as they have over past decades. I am opposed to those disruptions. We have worked hard to protect and conserve those species. Heavy logging in the 1960s through about 1984 on USFS ground in the Swan Valley, along with the accelerated cut on corporate timberlands through the 1990s, negatively affected biodiversity of all species here. From a historical perspective, this new proposal appears to lack any real new or innovative science regarding true Forest Health, or even any return to the old thinning methods where hand crews spent hours cleaning the woods of debris, piling slash, and then burning hand piles to clean the mess. What is proposed appears to be mostly the same old commercial logging, where bigger trees are harvested to help pay the logger for "stewardship" work, in this case described as thinning.

As far as the fuels reductions in the WUI, I understand the concern. However, I believe that private homeowners, the community, insurance companies, the State, and the Counties must assume more of the burden in preparing properties' Defensible Space for the devastating results of wildfire. We must acknowledge that even if you could cut every section -- as the Flathead National Forest is trying with this project -- to appease the conservative political base who believe that logging will stop wildfires, private homeowners might still lose everything in the face of wind-driven flames on a hot August afternoon. Historically, storms crossing the Mission Mountains can

produce freak winds that topple trees and spawn tornadoes on any given summer afternoon. Combined with lightning and drought -- whether there is fuel buildup or not -- even yew brush and aspen will carry flames and throw sparks.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my thoughts about this large project. Sincerely,

Suzanne M. Vernon PO Box 997

751 Triceratops Rd

Condon, MT 59826

406-754-2369