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Idaho Forest Essay Contest 2020

Sixth Grade

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### **Solving Idaho's Mistletoe Problem**

I like to hike and explore in forests. I would be sad if all the forests disappeared. Last month while hiking, I saw pine tree branches that were clumped together, rather than spread apart like they should be. This is called witches' broom. Witches' broom is a symptom of mistletoe. Mistletoe weakens trees, letting more insects and diseases infect the trees and making them more vulnerable to wildfire (1).

After seeing the mistletoe, I wondered if there is a cure for it. To get rid of the mistletoe you have to prune the infected area (2). Then you can strengthen the tree by spraying it with a plant stimulator (3). This is like giving the tree medicine so that it can fight the disease.

To get rid of the mistletoe problem in Idaho, people could help, just like those who volunteer to clean up roads or count birds. The Idaho Forest Service could provide a video and pamphlet to help people recognize mistletoe and how to treat the infected trees. Hikers could volunteer to prune a certain number of infected trees, then give the tree they pruned plant stimulator. Finally, the hikers would mark the tree so that others know which trees have been treated. If twenty people volunteered to trim five trees each during a summer, then one hundred trees could be treated. If this happened for five years, 500 trees could be helped. Since so many people in Idaho hike and come to our forests, more than twenty people would probably volunteer. If more people helped, this system could eventually eradicate the mistletoe disease.

I would help prune Idaho's trees to protect them. It would be cool if a tree that I helped protect from mistletoe was still here in a hundred years. I like our forests. I want future generations to see them.

#### Works Cited

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