



September 4, 2020

Shane Jeffries, Forest Supervisor
Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, Oregon

Re: Eastside Screens Plan Amendment Comments

Submitted via email to: SM.FS.EScreens21@usda.gov

Mr. Jeffries,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in relation to the Eastside Screens Plan Amendment and the draft Environmental Assessment dated August 11, 2020.

First, we recognize that this issue is a polarized one due to the many values placed on large and old trees that run the full spectrum of social, economic and ecological perspectives. However, we found following your teams presentation to us at our August 24th Board meeting that what the Forest Service proposes could truly be a vital win-win scenario that could serve to achieve the Forest Service goal of protecting and recruiting large and old trees while also advancing forest restoration efforts and supporting natural resource based economies.

We understand that insects, disease and fire have led to the estimated loss of 8% of large and old trees within the area being considered under this Environmental Analysis. It is clear that protecting these trees with the current approach is not optimal, and steps must be taken to reduce the continued mortality of these trees. We recognize the need for **active management** of National Forests to restore ecological process and function and minimize the impacts of further mortality of these large and old trees that are currently found to be deficient. We also see a need to support local businesses and jobs that are created conducting this work

and feel that cutting some trees larger than 21 inches is acceptable and necessary, and an outright prohibition on cutting we have seen since the early 1990's has had a detrimental effect to the forest industry and communities in eastern Oregon. We appreciate that the Forest Service is, after 25 years, considering a change to what was to be a temporary rule prohibiting the cutting of all trees over 21" in diameter.

Because of the above considerations, we support the proposed action and request that you select that alternative in your final decision. This relatively minor change will allow the National Forests in the scope of this EA to consider cutting of white fir, grand fir and Douglas-fir between 21" and 30" that are under 150 years old when necessary to achieve forest restoration goals, and will provide forest managers with increased flexibility to restore forests to more fire tolerant species, reduce the likelihood of high intensity wildfire and increase the probability of survival of the remaining trees. Without these changes, we will continue to see fires burn at high intensity, killing large and old trees while simultaneously diminishing the forests value for recreational use as well as future timber harvests.

We look forward to learning of your draft decision in the near future.

Sincerely,

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