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Clackamas River Ranger District
16400 Champion Way
Sandy, OR 97055

Clackamas Fires Roadside Danger Tree Assessment Draft Environmental Assessment 30-Day
Comment Period #61043

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the Clackamas Fires Roadside Danger Tree project. The draft environmental assessment contains robust project design criteria to protect resources like riparian areas and heritage resource sites during project implementation.

Since the fires of 2020 killed so many trees that will not be removed through salvage timber sales, I support the removal of these roadside danger trees. There will certainly be no shortage of snags and large down logs in the burned areas for decades to come.

I support the objective of removing trees that are at risk of failing in the near future to increase efficiency and reduce costs in order to avoid the need for multiple or annual repeated removal projects as time progresses.

I support allowing for some flexibility in determining the tree strike distance according to slope, terrain, and other factors rather than establishing one hard and fast distance across the project area.

I understand that the fires have changed the access needs for some areas and trust that the analysis team did a thorough job assessing transportation system with access needs and efficiency in mind. I do have a concern that so many roads are being closed that access to some quite large areas will be completely cut off for both the public and for the Forest Service, potentially causing more costs down the road in terms of lack of access for firefighting or resource management. With so many campgrounds burned over, dispersed camping will become more popular while there will be fewer and fewer spots accessible off of the main system roads for people to camp. That being said, I support the decisions made in this project to close some roads and change maintenance levels of others with the following exceptions.

Road 4540-140

This .82 mile road accesses South Fork Mountain and a view of several of the Cascade Mountain peaks. We used to drive up there periodically just to take in the view. This used to be the site of a fire lookout. While Memaloose Lake Trail #515 officially starts at a trailhead on road 4500 and ends at Memaloose Lake, there is an apparently unmaintained one-mile extension that

ends at the end of road 4540-140 up on South Fork Mountain. In fact the maps included in the environmental assessment show the trail ending at the 4540-140 even though the roads table says the trail does not end there and that closing the road would not impact access to the trail to Memaloose Lake. I know from experience that people did in fact access Memaloose Lake from the 4540-140, not just from the trailhead on road 4500. Since most of the area around Memaloose Lake and along this trail did not burn in the Riverside Fire, it now provides a rarer opportunity for hiking in an unburned forest in this area of the district. Trails like the Clackamas River Trail and Alder Flats and many others may never reopen after extensive fire damage. It seems that the opportunity to make official the “unofficial” portion of the Memaloose Lake Trail between the lake and the end of the 4540-140 which already accommodates several parked vehicles and offers a pretty spectacular view of several Cascade Mountain peaks is an idea that should be considered. This one-mile section of trail from Memaloose Lake up to the 4540-140 already exists, but for some reason it isn’t considered an official part of trail #515. For groups of two or more, keeping this road open would allow for someone to park a car at either end of a strenuous 2.2 mile trail through a mostly unburned wilderness area fairly close to Estacada for a ½ day through-hiking experience. The 4540-140 road does not cross any riparian reserve areas and if memory serves me correctly, it seems like it would be a low-cost road to maintain. This would be a missed opportunity to provide some more hiking opportunity at a time when many popular trails have recently been destroyed by fire.

Roads 4540-150 and 160

I would like consideration of keeping that portion of the 4540-150 open between the 4540 and the 4540-160 junction (maybe ¼ mile?) as well as the entire length of the 4540-160 (which is .32 mile) open. These roads access the top of Dead Horse Butte which I believe offers a view down into the Fish Creek drainage and an opportunity for dispersed camping. They do not cross riparian reserves and I believe are mostly flat with relatively low maintenance costs. I am not as concerned about these roads as the 4540-140, but would like some consideration of their potential asset to the public for accessing a viewpoint and an area for dispersed camping.

I encourage the Forest Service to implement this project as soon as possible so that some of the material may still have some commercial value that will hopefully offset at least some of the costs of removal. If there is any way to allow other organizations to utilize some of these logs for habitat restoration projects off-forest, please consider making them available for that use.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

/s/ Molly McKnight

Resident of Clackamas County

Former employee of Clackamas River Ranger District