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Response to Mill Creek Dry Forest Restoration Project # 58081, Draft Environmental Assessment

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Mill Creek Dry Forest Restoration Project.

I support the purpose and need for this project and urge Forest managers to select **Alternative 3** with slight modifications, relative to the following:

1. Seek to perpetuate the historic open park-like ponderosa pine forest with the removal of competing species of fir and **juniper**. While I agree with the removal of all large and old fir and juniper trees, please seek to keep as many large and genetically superior ponderosa pine as possible for the perpetuation of a fire resilient forest.
2. Seek to manage forest species in riparian areas with an emphasis on stream hardwoods, reducing pines appropriately to keep competition to a minimum and maximizing riparian health for fish, wildlife and plant species and for the enjoyment of the recreating public.
3. Emphasize removal of forest vegetation through **timber sales and bio-mass projects** as opposed to prescribed fire. While prescribed fire is a legitimate and useful tool, existing conditions of prolonged drought, anticipated climatic conditions creating further drought, and adverse conditions (smoke, risk to adjacent landowners, etc) make mechanical removal preferable. When using prescribed fire, please mimic historic ponderosa pine fire regimes with small and frequent fires kept mainly in the understory and in places where grazing is not effectively reducing fuels.
4. Actively seek to engage and partner with adjacent private landowners, grazing permittees, public lands managers, state lands managers, and state agencies quickly for the removal of bio-mass and the restoration of forest health. Work with grazing permittees as partners in this effort, maximizing opportunities to fully utilize allowable AUMs through allotment improvements, etc. Rely on monitoring to inform these decisions.

Relative to all alternatives:

1. A **forest plan amendment** should be done to allow for accepted ground based mechanical harvesting treatments as opposed to helicopter logging on steep slopes (i.e., slopes greater than 35%). These projects must be economically feasible for the purchasers or they will go elsewhere and the purpose and need of this project will not be met.
2. Please remove all references to Lemon Gulch project as Forest Management has suspended that project indefinitely and it appears poor editing has left it in the document.
3. Initiating, maintaining, and using water yield monitoring and resulting data as an indicator of the success of meeting the purpose of this project should be a part of the decision no matter what alternative is chosen.
4. Aggressive actions to control invasive species and to control insect and disease are as important to a healthy and resilient forest as appropriate stocking and perpetuation of ponderosa pine as the predominant "dry forest" species.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment on this project and we look forward to working with you towards a healthy and resilient Ponderosa Pine Forest!

Sincerely,

Kim Vogel

