US Forest Service

Twisp Ranger District

Subject: The Midnight Project

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Midnight Project.

My wife Karen and I have lived the Methow both full time and part time since 1975 up Poorman Creek Rd on Second Mile Ranch. In all those years we have raised our family and our daughter Michelle Shaffer raised her children on our property and our son Michael “Bird” Shaffer lives there now. Over the years in the Methow, I have worked in the woods doing pre-commercial thinning, planted trees and piled brush. I loved flying reconnaissance and Smoke Jumpers as a contract pilot for the USFS. My recon & Smoke Jumper piloting experiences and working with our dedicated Smoke Jumpers before, during and after they had been on fires gave me a good understanding of what’s required to both prevent and to fight fires.

I’ve listened to the different perspectives and arguments over how best to manage out forests to prevent fires like those that hit us hard the last few years and that forced us to evacuate more than once. We are all in favor of a plan that will help lessen the fire dangers in our valley and there are some good proposals in the Midnight Project EA.

Do you believe in your mission statement? - "Advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests and associated lands".

It appears to us that the bulk of the Midnight Project EA has economic objectives that are focused on commercial logging that dominates this proposal over all other considerations. If allowed to go forward, the impact of this project will be devastating and will dramatically alter the landscape for decades to come resulting in what is already visible in our valley where machine logging has been allowed.

I do not want economics to be the driving force behind the decisions that are made. I want the Forest Service to:

* Not allow logging on steep slopes so it does not conflict with restoration projects.
* Not allow logging of any large trees over 20.9” in diameter to restore old forests on the Midnight Project.
* Drop all exceptions for cutting large trees especially in the Late-Successional Reserves.
* For transparency and public confidence, that forest management actions be conducted by the marking of trees and not allow condition based management.

Fundamentally, it appears that the entire project has been perverted by the desire to log the most marketable large diameter and fire resistant trees for the economic gain of a very small percentage of recipients disguised as fire protection at the expense of all other considerations. The lands included in the Midnight proposal are habitat for several species and any actions in the area should not jeopardize literally millions of dollars of investment in salmon recovery in the overall watershed. In addition, the current plan completely disregards the scars on the landscape, the impact on local recreation economics and activities which is a huge driver of the overall economy in the Methow. The impact on our environment will dramatically detract from both the ecological integrity and the aesthetic qualities of our valley in a way that will result in both known and unintended consequences.

We love the Methow, and the entire Twisp River Valley and we don’t want it to be impacted the way the land has already been in both the Mission and Libby Creek projects in the name of fire protection when it’s obvious to us there is an economic agenda being justified using fire fear tactics.

Respectfully submitted,

Captain Terry R. Shaffer and Karen Shaffer

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