



BLUERIBBON
COALITION

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BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) is writing to provide scoping feedback for the Carbon River Landscape Analysis. BRC is a national non-profit organization that champions responsible recreation and encourages a strong conservation ethic and individual stewardship. We champion responsible use of public lands and waters for the benefit of all recreationists by educating and empowering our members to secure, protect, and expand shared outdoor recreation access and use by working collaboratively with natural resource managers and other recreationists. Our members use motorized and non-motorized means of recreation, including OHVs, horses, mountain bikes, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout the United States, including those of the Forest Service. Many of our members and supporters live in Washington or travel across the country to visit Washington and use motorized vehicles to access USFS managed lands throughout Washington. BRC members visit the Thunder Cat management area for motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, hunting, wildlife and nature study, camping, and other similar pursuits. We would like to add our support to any comment submitted by any other individuals or organizations that advocate for motorized use and increased recreation access overall. BRC members and supporters have concrete, definite, and immediate plans to continue such activities in the future.

Roads and Trails

We support providing the maximum number of routes and trails open to all users possible. We commend the USFS for recognizing that roads are an integral piece to proper forest management and wildfire prevention and believe road maintenance in this project should be fully approved. No routes or areas should be decommissioned or closed it is concerning the

amount of roads proposed to be decommissioned in this project. In fact the USFS should strongly consider keeping as much area as possible open to recreation users so they are not concentrated in smaller areas to mitigate impacts that come from concentrated use. This land should benefit as many users as possible. These roads are used by recreationists that benefit the local economies and businesses, emergency response teams to aid in public health and safety as well as act as natural fire lines. We support all temporary roads needed for the completion of the project to be permanently adopted into the Forest Service trail system.

Vegetation Treatments

Habitat loss is the largest threat to wildlife and wildfire is the largest threat to habitat loss. One wildfire could cause an entire species to go extinct. We support the Forest Service in properly managing the forests to prevent wildfires that could cause harm to wildlife. However, many conservation groups actively litigate forest projects that help mitigate fires. One of the best things that can be done to protect wildlife and habitat is to actively manage forests to prevent wildfires. In order to adequately manage the forest roads are a critical component. Roads not only provide access to carry-out forest management projects but also act as a natural fire barrier.

If prescribed burn is chosen for an area, and a wildfire arises at any point, that wildfire should be treated as such and the USFS should not allow the wildfire to burn in order to meet prescribed burn objectives. This involves a lot of risks and wildfires should always be treated with as much urgency to suppress the fire as possible.

Timber Harvest

Timber harvest and any sales from forest treatments will also help stimulate the local economy. We believe the USFS should move forward with timber harvest on the maximum amount of area needed. Timber harvest provides local jobs and brings in local revenue. BRC supports these efforts and supports any comments made by locals and members who approve these projects for local economic benefit.

Public Health and Safety

The U.S. Forest Service should be doing everything in its power to prevent wildfire from arising by approving and moving forward with firescape projects. "It is well documented that exposure to wildfire smoke is associated with adverse respiratory, cardiovascular, and birth outcomes, and premature mortality."¹

“Over the last three decades, the acreage burned annually by wildfire across the United States has doubled. This trend is driven by western states such as California, which experienced a fivefold increase in annual acreage burned from wildfire over the last half- century (Williams et al., 2019). While wildfires can impact the environment and human health through various pathways (e.g., impaired drinking water, soils, and crops)”²

Addressing hazardous trees along roads and trails is also crucial for the public’s health and safety. This project should analyze and fall all hazardous trees identified along the routes in order to protect public users.

Conclusion

We would like to close by saying we support “shared use”. As long as overall visitation numbers are appropriate for the affected resources, motorized and non-motorized users can be compatible with one another so long as individual users understand designations and plan their activities accordingly. Indeed, motorized and nonmotorized recreation use often overlap as OHV’s often increase accessibility to non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking, camping, equestrian use, etc. We also hold that responsible recreational use of public lands can exist in harmony with ecosystem needs.

BRC would like to be considered an interested public for this project. Information can be sent to the following address and email address:

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ben Burr', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ben Burr
Executive Director
BlueRibbon Coalition

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Simone Griffin'.

Simone Griffin
Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition

² <https://siepr.stanford.edu/publications/policy-brief/managing-growing-cost-wildfire>