

My name is Chris Berry. I have been a Portland resident for the last two years, and have spent much of my time in Oregon exploring the lands of Mount Hood National Forest (MHNF). I have also used my time in Oregon volunteering for Bark doing forest/habitat survey work and educating myself on the plants and wildlife that call this region home. The experience I have gained has allowed me to learn about how important these ecosystems are to us.

I am writing this letter in regards to the Stone Creek Vegetation Management Project. Based on what I have learned from my peers and my experiences in the field, I am aware that you are using reasonable practices (including following NEPA) to proceed with this project. However, as someone who stands for the preservation of biodiversity and forested ecosystems on MHNF, I still want to use this opportunity to share my thoughts and the advocate for the proper execution of this project in a variety of areas.

First off, you should incorporate Indigenous knowledge and management strategies by collaborating with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. This collaboration should be applied for his project and any other projects that take place in their historic homelands and ceded territories.

In all applicable commercial/non-commercial thin and “timber stand improvement” units, I urge you to preserve the biological legacies left behind from the industrial logging performed in past decades, including the more mature trees, standing dead trees, and downed logs which are mainly comprised of Douglas Fir and Western Hemlock. Their preservation will act as a catalyst for the accelerated revival of plant and wildlife diversity and structural diversity in the project areas that have since lacked these features due to extensive logging in the 70’s-90’s. These legacies were found in units 1356, 1358, 2001, and 1362, which I surveyed with my peers last month, and are sure to be found in the surrounding project units.

While I do support the action to close and decommission roads in the project area, it is essential to ensure that the closed roads are no longer accessible by vehicles before the processes begin. This can prevent the existing dispersed campsites from accumulating more waste, and would prevent recovering streams and sensitive riparian areas from being damaged from vehicle traffic.

I also strongly support the use of fire in the project area. Implementing the use of fire in management strategies, especially when used in collaboration of local tribes, is essential in bolstering the health and resiliency of the forested lands in the project area. Based on historical evidence of the positive impact fire has on forest ecosystem biodiversity and resiliency, the implementation of prescribed burns in this project should also act as a reference point for more extensive applications of fire in future restoration/vegetation treatment projects in MHNF.

For the sake of the diverse ecosystems of MHNF, please consider my notes on your project. I hope this letter sparks some inspiration to advocate for the preservation of the public’s ability to comment on future FS project proposals.

