

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/17/2020 3:11:46 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a 23-year-old person who has grown up in the Pacific Northwest. I have visited the Flat Country proposed project area many times over the past two years. I first learned about this project through a volunteer trip with Cascadia Wildlands and was appalled to find how out how large in scope and potentially devastating it could be. As I looked further into the project, I discovered that there are some justifiable intentions to thin in certain areas that are already plantation-style forests, while other areas un-rightfully target precious old-growth habitat. This is why I encourage the Forest Service to choose Alternative 3 and to not do any regeneration harvests on native forests in this watershed I love so much.

I have been to all of the units circled on the attached map, but just this past weekend, on March 14th, I visited unit 1300 with about 25 others. I would like to share my comments and concerns briefly about some of the units I've visited previously, focus on unit 1300, and finally discuss my thoughts on the project as a whole.

Units visited:

10, 1320, 1300, 1650, 300, 1570, 1580, 1630, 1870, 1970, 1910

Unit 1630:

When I walked through this area with a group of others during the fall, we found a number of old-growth snags dispersed within larger old growth douglas fir. We discovered evidence of the animal species who lived there including bear and coyote scat as well as a pileated woodpecker. We also ran into some people who were hunting for deer and found a trap. The area is also well known and loved as a place to forage for edible and medicinal mushrooms.

Unit 1970:

Dispersed old growth douglas fir with some DBH averaging around 40 inches. This area appears to be previously logged and could use some thinning in certain areas, although the larger trees should be protected.

Unit 1300:

This area surrounding Anderson Creek is teeming with seeps, rich moist soil, natural breaks, and incredible biodiversity. Although this area contains riparian buffers around the streams, the surrounding areas slated for thinning should be dropped because of the difficult task machinery would have in avoiding the disturbance of streams. The slivers of harvestable units in between the buffers are also in no need of thinning - they are full of natural open areas due to fire, including dispersed meadow-like areas, and small streams and seeps. The large douglas fir, some up to 71 DBH, is accompanied by many other species including western hemlocks, western white pine, shrubs, and fungus. I am also concerned about only leaving 40 trees per acre in even the small areas of this unit when the forest exhibits all of the characteristics of old-growth, including complex stand composition and biodiversity as well as natural open areas.

The area is vital habitat to animal species as well - when I was there I found bear scat and saw at least 10 old snags with pileated woodpecker holes. The area, like other locations in the timber sale and the McKenzie River Watershed as a whole, is very popular for people to discover all the wonders that nature has to offer - be it hunting, plant identification, or edible food foraging. These forests are also essential for mitigating the worst impacts of climate change and should, therefore, be left intact.

Conclusion:

The Forest Service's job is to protect unique habitat, drinking water, and recreation opportunities and not sacrifice

those values for timber harvests. I understand that timber will continue to be harvested, but there are ways to satisfy all parties - including the species who rely on this habitat. I urge the Forest Service to choose Alternative 3 and only choose to thin young monocrop plantations for commercial harvests and avoid harvesting intact, native, old-growth stands. I want to be able to bring my children to this place someday and marvel at the beauty of biodiversity, not boring tree plantations. Finally, although I have been lucky to spend a good amount of time in this area, many of the units farther east from Unit 1300 are inaccessible at this time due to snow, and have been inaccessible since the EIS comment period opened. This has made it difficult for members of the public to engage in this process, so I suggest that the public comment period be open during the summer or fall months. Thank you.