

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/1/2024 8:00:00 AM

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Title:

Comments: I am writing to object to the new forest plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National forests (NPCNF) released in November of 2023 that targets for logging all remaining old growth and mature forest not within specifically congressionally designated wilderness. In Idaho, just across the Bitterroot Divide from Montana where I live, the new plan calls for massive clear-cuts, nearly doubling previous annual quotas. The Forest Service seems not to recognize the climate crisis (not much of a winter here in Missoula!) and the important role that older, intact forests can play in mitigating that.

The Forest Service claims that only massive timber harvest can tame the wildfire danger the supposedly overgrown forest poses to surrounding human communities. It is humanity that is out of control, and it is likely that if global warming is left unchecked, the Forest Service will get its wish, and the entire Northern Rockies will be a barren, unmenacing desert. "Treating" supposedly unhealthy wooded landscapes with chainsaws is bad, shortsighted medicine. According to scientific studies - apparently not the scientists the Forest Service consults - U.S. National Forests absorb 12-15% of the carbon this country generates, with old growth forest like that within the NPCNF doing most of the work.

It shouldn't be left to judges to require the Forest Service to recognize goals and interests beyond narrow, immediate human ones. While we sprawl and swarm across the landscape, other living organisms are more tightly bound to their habitat. For example, the new plan for the NPCNF fails to recognize the mountain goat as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need, even though their numbers are in steep decline. Their lives are further threatened by the plan's failure to manage the Great Burn or Hoodoo roadless area as wilderness. Snowmobiler's are a small but vocal minority of people for whom the FS has opened 40,00 acres of goat, bear, bird, elk habitat. Calling themselves Snowmobile Patriots doesn't entitle them to any special privileges, certainly not worthy of reducing the recommended wilderness by a third. Thank you and happy new year,

John Dunkum

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