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First name: Alexa

Last name: Whipple

Organization: Methow Beaver Project

Title: Project Director

Comments: RE: Please include and prioritize beaver ecosystem management in the NW Forest Plan Amendment.

I am Alexa Whipple, Project Director of the Methow Beaver Project, formed in 2008 out of a partnership between the USFS Methow Ranger District (Okanogan Wenatchee Forest), WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, and the Methow Conservancy. We now operate as a program of Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation. We are a holistic beaver management organization practicing and providing services related to beaver coexistence, beaver-based stream restoration, beaver relocation, training and workshops in the above areas, and modernizing regulatory and policy related to beavers. We are happy to support the development of a holistic amendment to the NW Forest Plan that includes beaver management in their role as a keystone species, as a natural water storage strategy, as a climate resilience strategy, and a species that comes into conflict with human priorities. Beavers are critical to sustainable watershed function, ecological function, disturbance resilience, biodiversity support, and climate adaptation potential.

Beaver based restoration and conservation of USFS riverscapes meets many of the NW Forest Plans original objectives and is one of the lowest cost, lowest tech, and lowest impact nature and process-based restoration and long-term maintenance strategies we have. We must manage our forests and watersheds for the complexity that gives them the greatest resilience from climate challenges and offers the best habitat to support sustaining biodiversity. Beavers are a pragmatic partner in managing riverscape and watershed scale complexity and have much to share that we all can benefit from.

There is a plethora of published data and case studies to back up the benefits of beavers in our forest planning, specifically riparian management. We have numerous project areas to also back up those published studies. However, what isn't included in many studies nor restoration project plans nor regulatory practices is beaver coexistence strategies when/if beavers become a challenge to priorities. This needs to be included due to human modifications to our watersheds including infrastructure risks and habitat simplification across forest lands including roads, culverts, bridges, campgrounds, etc... We currently have active and effective coexistence devices on USFS lands in the Methow Ranger District, Okanogan Wenatchee Forest and many more on private lands. We have a growing toolbox of coexistence strategies to help manage beavers in place and if we cannot find a feasible solution, we can relocate in WA State. It would be ideal if the USFS could develop an MOU related to relocation on all US Forest Service lands in every state.

Please consider me and Methow Beaver Project a resource in the amendment process when it comes to managing and coordinating partnering with beavers.

Thank you for considering my comments!

Alexa Whipple

Project Director

Methow Beaver Project, a program of Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation

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I have included an attachment developed by Sarah Bates and co-authors to help advocate for beaver restoration and management on USFS lands. I imagine it is being used as a resource already but just in case it isn't, you

have it now.