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First name: Richard Randal

Last name: Son

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Attached Word Document is our Objection to the Tiger-Mill EA and FONSI.

In case of upload failure, here is the text:

November 4, 2024

Reviewing Official, Eric Watrud

Attn: Tiger-Mill Project

72510 Coyote Road,

Pendleton, OR 97801

Re: R. Randal Son's Objections to the Tiger-Mill Project's Final Environmental Assessment and Draft Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact, submitted to Eric Watrud, Forest Supervisor, Umatilla National Forest, 72510 Coyote Road, Pendleton, OR 97801; electronically at:
<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=62658>

Objection Reviewing Official, Forest Supervisor:

R. Randal Son (Lead Objector) and Kevin Scribner (84794 Neotoma Ln, Walla Walla, - Oregon Side- 99362) submit this Objection, pursuant to 36 C.F.R. Part 218, on behalf of to the U.S. Forest Service's ("Forest Service" or the "Service") 2024 Tiger-Mill Project Environmental Assessment, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Draft Decision Notice ("EA" and/or "Draft DN/FONSI"). Son's physical address is 10701 Mill Creek Rd., Walla Walla, WA, 99362. Eric Watrud, Umatilla National Forest Supervisor, is the responsible Forest Service Official and the project would be implemented in the Walla Walla Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest. Son and Scribner have previously submitted timely written comments regarding this project during the Project's scoping phase.

Objection 1) (Reiterates our comment in 2023) With current trends in conditions and performance within the considered watershed and subbasins,, Historic Range and Variability as a guide for landscape treatments is not sufficient. The Project EA and FONSI do not account for the effect of changing climate on the Project Area when setting targets for conditions after the proposed treatments.

From: The use of historical range and variability (HRV) in landscape management. Robert E. Keane a,*, Paul F. Hessburg b,1, Peter B. Landres c, Fred J. Swanson d,2; Forest Ecology and Management. 258: 1025-1037.

"To use HRV in an operational context, it must be assumed that the record of historical conditions more or less reflects the range of possible conditions for future landscapes; an assumption that we now know is overly simplistic because of documented climate change, exotic introductions, and human land use. While managers need to recognize the importance of using historical landscape dynamics as HRV reference conditions to ensure there is minimal loss of important landscape elements, managers also need to evaluate if current management will be within acceptable and feasible bounds for potential future landscape conditions. Looking both to the past and to the future will be essential for the future of land management. The most obvious action is to augment an HRV

time series with an additional reference time series, we call FRV (Future Range and Variation), which represents predicted characteristics of future landscapes and ecosystems. These FRV time series can be generated from complex climate sensitive landscape models that mechanistically simulate disturbance and vegetation developmental processes in a spatial domain (Bachelet et al., 2001; Keane et al., 2004)." (Emphasis mine - R.S.)

Remedy for Objection 1:

The inadequate EA and supporting Specialist Analyses can be resolved by withdrawing the Final EA and FONSI and preparing a draft EIS utilizing FRV, described above, that addresses the specific issues raised by this objection, and circulating that DEIS for public comment.

Objection 2) New Conditions since the Initial Scoping Comments:

The Forest Service must provide supplemental NEPA analysis when there are "significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts." 40 C.F.R. § 1502.9(d)(1)(ii) (2020); Idaho Sporting Cong. v. Alexander, 222 F.3d 562, 566 (9th Cir. 2000) (extending the duty to undertake supplemental analysis to projects analyzed using an EA). Importantly, there need not be any guarantee that the new information be significant. Rather, new information or changed conditions need only raise substantial questions regarding significance. Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Ctr. v. Boody, 468 F.3d 549, 561?62 (9th Cir. 1998). This is particularly evident in the NEPA regulations that went into effect on July 1, 2024, which amended the language of 40 C.F.R. § 1502.9(d)(1)(ii) to clarify that "substantial new circumstances or information," triggers supplemental NEPA analysis rather than "significant new circumstances."

A) FEMA Funded Watershed Planning

Since the Initial Scoping Period and Comments, the City of Walla Walla was awarded funds from FEMA to complete a Watershed All Risks Resiliency Master Plan. This effort will examine not only fire risk, but weather and climate change effects, including flood and drought, and other risks. These include the current lack of emergency access around the City's Intake Area. This comprehensive plan is projected to be completed by the end of 2025.

Remedy for New Condition A:

No actions proposed in this Project, including burning, thinning, and all forms of logging, in any area or subbasin upgradient of the Municipal Watershed, both inside and outside its Boundary, should begin before the completion of the Watershed Resiliency Master Plan, and not until subsequent Intake Area Emergency Access improvements are made.

B) Loss of control of prescribed burn / insufficient prescribed burn parameters

On September 27, 2024, the Forest Service initiated the 335-acre prescribed fire approved in the Tiger Creek Prescribed Fire Project. The purpose of the Tiger Creek project was to reduce hazardous fuels surrounding the Mill Creek Municipal watershed, id., but during the course of implementing the planned burn, a shift in the

weather caused the fire to encroach into the Tiger-Mill Project planning area. As of October 2, 2024, 155 acres had burned within the Tiger-Mill Project area and within the Mill Creek Municipal Watershed itself.

While Forest officials said that initial conditions to "drop the match" on this burn were "within parameters," it is clear from the results that the parameters were insufficient to allow a safe prescribed burn.

Remedy for New Condition B:

No prescribed burning should be initiated in any of the Project Area until the parameters for allowing a burn are reviewed and adjusted.

(Signed)

Nov. 4, 2024