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Organization:

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Comments: Dear Duane Bishop-Acting Forest Supervisor, Willamette National Forest(WNF), Nikki Swanson-Sweet Home District Ranger,

Why are we encompassing an entire Wilderness area inside a huge logging project in the Quartzville and Middle Santiam Watersheds of Sweet Home Ranger District? There are already more than enough lands designated for timber production. The Middle Santiam area, with its unstable soils, is highly unsuitable for resource extraction- and won't be profitable. Harvesting in the QMS Project area will not provide "a sustainable supply of timber to local communities", one of the project's chief goals.

The Quartzville-Middle Santiam Project(QMS) is oversized in potentially 'treating' nearly 7,800 acres in an 89,000 acre Planning Area. It sets a dangerous precedent of allowing "forest treatments" in the heart of a unique ancient forest Watershed surrounding Designated Wilderness. This key habitat corridor was supposed to be set aside for its Roadless area, botanically amazing riparian habitat/ Special Interest Areas, its headwaters to the wild Middle Santiam River, and Late Successional Reserves(LSR) that include some of the last remaining mixed species old-growth native ancient forest. It had already been greatly reduced to an island of biodiversity by past immense, devastating clearcuts (\*1970s-1990s/ checkerboard ownership/FS, Road 2041 Etc.). Now it needs protection; not harvesting for timber production at what will probably be a break-even or net-loss to the cost of the work input. The whole Middle Santiam/Old Cascades area is geologically unique; immense landslides- seen as cliffs and rock fields from the far past--and seen in the more recent 100+-acre slump triggered by clearcut logging that closed FS Road 2041 near the Middle Santiam River bridge. The area's historically steep, unstable clay soils make road construction- or reconstruction- a mere gamble- and not even cost effective to harvest or thin in these forests. They could very well be cut at a net-loss.

Who/How will the on-the-ground overseeing be done- that the intended age class, harvest trees and unit boundaries, riparian reserves are obeyed?

Please reconsider in your Final Decision, the immense impacts to the Middle Santiam Wilderness Area, the Watersheds and contiguous forest, of building up to 293 miles+ of roads-with the maintenance and road reconstruction. Even Alternative 4 with it acres of thinning, opens this region to harvesting in / and adjacent to Riparian units-and contains too much roadwork, Dominant Tree Release (DTRs) in the LSRs...and increases forest fire risks while we are in an all-time highest risk era.

Your Final decision should NOT be harvesting in these Watersheds--especially the headwaters of the Middle Santiam River- so close to old growth cedar and hemlock riparian areas (unit 137, Swamp Creek, 147), nearby McQuade Creek drainage, and adjacent to Designated M.S. Wilderness (units 177, 189). The Sweet Home Ranger District knows we cannot be trying to squeeze board feet lumber out of areas like these, and needs to be a better steward of this public land and should also omit units 166, 285 and 176. Let's pay attention to Tree Vole, Spotted Owl and Fisheries habitat, as well as water health. Remember, cutting this will include industrial logging with its aftermath "care" of aerial herbicide spraying to hold down understory growth for replanting, of units harvested, and Road work, affecting the entire region's watershed health.

This kind of harvesting- in this kind of area- should not even be on the table during an era of increasingly intense climate change. Please consider the future carbon sink costs, as well as the true net cost of harvesting here in the unstable soils of the Middle Santiam, and further whittling away of the roadless area. Knowing that Alternative 1 most likely won't be selected, Alternative 4 should be amended to reduce roads, impacts to the LSRs near the MS Wilderness Area/Watershed and riparian areas; QMS project scaled-down would be safer, for a better outcome.

Please weigh-in heavily on the cost and true impacts of the current version of Alternative 4 that will change this special native forest landscape of the Middle Santiam- as you make your final decision on the QMS project.

Thank you.