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Title:

Comments: The trees and creeks, the mammals, birds and fish and the humans that love nature urge me on to write my objections to the USFS about the Mission "Restoration" Project. I don't speak Legalese Forest Service double-talk so I will just speak my own language. I love my home in the Methow Valley in the Libby Creek Watershed that is surrounded by USFS lands. I accept that fire is a part of this habitat. We have fire-safed our home and are prepared to fight fire if it should come to our dwelling. I choose to take my chances with natural processes.

I object to the lack of transparency of the USFS Methow Valley Ranger District in regards to the Mission "Restoration" Project. It is with a shabby cloak of misleading information that the FS is attempting to foist this "restoration" project off on the Methow Valley. Between ignorance, fear and apathy the residents of the Methow appear to have succumbed to the rhetoric of the FS. In Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus some synonyms for collaborate are-'in cahoots, collude, conspire.' Yes, that is what the members of the Collaborative did cooking up the Mission "Restoration" Project. Timber companies, conservation groups, First Peoples and the USFS 'hooked up' for the benefit of each, trading timber for favors unknown to the public, and then coming to the conclusion that logging would save the Methow from Catastrophic Fire and proceeded to disseminate their "truth" with performances such as Paul Hessburg's MEGAFIRE. It is the policy of the USFS to encourage the public to participate as team members in forest management formulation. But when it came time for decisions to be made with the MRP the public's comments were disregarded and the FS went with Alternative #2 which was always the conclusion that they would arrive at-a "done deal," so to speak.

I object to the FS continuing the status quo that exacerbates the forest's ill-health and vulnerability to wildfire. We can't change high temperatures, low humidity and strong winds. These are the conditions here in the summer in the Methow which we must learn to live with. The USFS could be of great assistance to educate our communities about fire behavior and how to protect our properties. We can change: cattle allotments, commercial logging and fire suppression. Isn't that what we should be doing?-changing what we can control.

I object to the misinformation pedaled by the FS implying that their "best available science" is the only plan that will save our forest. Their plan is 30 year old information that is outdated and not applicable to the world as it is now. The world has irrevocably changed. Many ecologically sound ideas have been suggested to the FS throughout this project by residents and resident scientists but were dismissed in favor of Alternative#2.

I object to the cows trampling through the forest leaving erosion in their wake, bringing invasive species seeds on their hooves, destroying the aquatic habitat for endangered salmonids and contributing to conditions that make forest fires move faster and hotter. I object to the USFS catering to the cattle industry by engineering the forest for the cows via such avenues as herbicides applied to plants poisonous to bovines.

Logging is not equivalent to the complex natural process of forest fire and therefore is not a substitute for it. I object to the MRP on the grounds that it will take our forest out on the backs of the logger's trucks giving the valley nothing in return. Note that the Mission Restoration Project sounds like a quick fix for the forest but is in reality just resource extraction and unfunded restorations that may or may not ever occur.

Fire is a natural phenomena contributing to the health of the forest and results in smaller fires and more safety for us. I object to the use of fire suppression by the USFS as a strategy to control fire. Even though it is well known that fire suppression has had dreadful repercussions on the health of the forest, still the FS continues to use it. They might better educate the population how to live with fire and allow wildfire to burn away from human habitation.

I object to the FS "best available science" that is not aligned with the truth for our untenable times. Latest studies of fire science are indicating that the most logged areas in the West are the best indicator for the highest intensity of fire which is the opposite of USFS policy. I am afraid that wildfire will first eat up the ICO'ed forest and then move on hot and fast to us and our communities.

I object to the blatant disregard for residents' safety on the part of the FS on Libby Creek Road with narrow dirt roads and unstable hillsides. Winter recreation with snowmobiles and a teen musher happen on the proposed logging road, adding logging trucks with heavy loads going down hill is irresponsible and dangerous. (Black Pine Road just had a landslide in the past week.)

I object to the apparent conflict of interest between the relationships of the FS to the cattle and logging industries. How does the USFS benefit from this time-worn collaboration?

I object to the lack of clarity around WUI. Rather than go with an amorphous distance between forest and home/community infrastructure, that the USFS Wilderness Urban Interface adheres to, the specific number-100 feet-is a good defensible space.

I object to the endangered salmonids in Libby Creek being used as collateral damage in the Mission "Restoration" Project. The aquatic study by John Crandall for the MRP was not a new study but consisted of rehashing out-dated statistics that probably worked conveniently for the USFS. That misrepresentation could very well tip the balance in the survival of the listed/endangered salmonids.

I object to the FS rushing to remove the forest when it is a known fact that shrub-steppe burns hotter and faster than forest-interesting that the FS has so little to recommend around this biome that supplied more acres to the Carlton Complex Fire of 2014. Could it be a lack of extractable commodity that shrub-steppe gets so little attention?

As few as 10 trees/acre? Really? Does the FS find this amount of cover adequate to house so many species of mammals, birds and fish of the Libby Creek and Buttermilk Watersheds/10,220 acres that they are responsible for stewarding, or is this just more collateral damage?

What about protecting snags within the 10,220 acre footprint? Tree ecologists know that snags are the best wildlife habitat in the forest. So, I am wondering how preserving snags figures into the commercial logging of these two watersheds. If there is no plan to protect them then I object to this grave oversight.

I object to the shoddy treatment the USFS is perpetrating on the old growth. Talk about making, bending or changing the rules. Old growth trees are like our grandmothers and grandfathers. And because they are not at a certain density/as in they've already been thinned-they can be flagrantly harvested. This is a travesty and a crime!

Leave the forest in peace. The trees know how to grow. And die. Fire comes through, big or small, depending on conditions. The animals run, swim or fly away. Some die. The forest is decimated or thinned or singed. The forest begins recovery from this natural event immediately. It begins again. But with man's continuous manipulation of the forest it is interrupted in its repair cycle. The USFS does not grasp a whole systems perspective that the forest would recover if just left alone.

By allowing the firemen to protect the community infrastructure within a defined 100 foot limit, people could preserve their homes and community safely while letting fire clean up the mess that we have allowed to accumulate due to the USFS policy of fire suppression.

The USFS could alter their image to educate rather than mislead the public, offering transparent motives and goals. And rather than devote 2.1 billion dollars to fire suppression from Federal sources there could be lots of

money for true restoration.

But people's greed and lack of transparency complicate the situation. The USFS "best available science" is whatever science fits its goals for timber extraction. Its roots and conclusions are from some photos from the 1930's and is not open to looking at new valid scientific insights and consider the effects of climate change in more than a cursory manner. A predetermined decision #2 is not a democratic process.

How can we come together to consider what is good for all of us, humans and animals and the forest? How can we reconnect with the earth, the forest, mountains and ocean before we blunder into self destructive driven extinction from rapacity?

Joanne Cooper, Member Libby Creek Watershed Association