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First name: Harold

Last name: Brunstad

Organization:

Title:

Comments: This project appears to be a combination of a vegetation management project and road decommissioning project which in the past have been conducted as stand-alone projects. Unfortunately, some of the earlier road decommissioning projects got ahead of the vegetation management projects and basically foreclosed on the opportunity for thinning in some areas because of the considerable expense involved reestablishing access.

I totally support the thinning component of this project. Thinning projects occurring in the Pacific Ranger District (South) currently and over the past several years have added a significant contribution to the adjacent communities' economies in the form of jobs, wood fiber and county revenues. The improved forest transportation system associated with these projects have significantly improved public access to these areas for public recreation.

The road decommissioning component of this project is excessive and causes great concern not only for potential future public access but also future thinning opportunities.

Of particular concern is the road decommissioning proposed on the 2275 and 2270 road systems, which encompasses a significant portion of the project area and where no thinning units are proposed.

Question 1: Are there no potential future thinning opportunities on these extensive road systems?

Question 2: If there is, why are the access to these potential sites being destroyed?

Similar decommissioning concerns include the 2200/340 system; 2271/640; 2284/580; 2371/260 & 280; and similar segments of roads throughout the project area.

The project proposal states that "a goal of the NWFP is to provide a sustainable level of forest products for local and regional economies and provide jobs." Under the management diktat of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan for the Olympic Forest, that is an impossible goal to meet; under the Plan's current management direction, the Olympic Forest is destined to become simply a "Forest Reserve" in a matter of a few decades. The level of road decommissioning proposed in the Project suggests that current forest management objectives are to accelerate the forest's transformation to that "Forest Reserve" status.

Decommissioning a road just because it was not constructed to the latest standards or located in a location that would not be selected by today's standards, if the road is functioning well and is not (or has not over several decades) caused any damage to aquatic or riparian resources and provides a short segment in a lengthy connecting road system, why remove it from the inventory? An example is the section of road on 2281 west of the 2294 proposed for decommissioning. That would eliminate a fairly lengthy loop access for public recreation utilizing the 2281 and parts of the 2294 and 2200.

The timber harvesting component of the past multiple-use concept of managing our Northwest National Forest system funded the development and maintenance of its transportation infrastructure over half a century. Although the economic and social value of the Forest to adjacent communities seems to have been lowered to a minor consideration in management priorities under the Northwest Forest Plan, timber harvest activities will most likely be the primary generator of funding to maintain the forest's infrastructure.

The NWFP is currently undergoing a lengthy and in-depth scientific assessment to determine if the 1994

management plan direction and goals were appropriate and scientifically defensible. Until that assessment is completed and published and the long-term management direction is established, the level of roads proposed for decommissioning in this project seems a premature action.

I recognize the need for the Forest managers to take actions to reduce its maintenance requirements on the Forest road system. However, due to the uncertainty of the Region 6 future management direction noted above, decommissioning should be used only in cases where resources are at risk or it can be determined that a road segment is no longer needed. Reducing much of the system proposed for decommissioning to Maintenance Level 1 would be appropriate at this time.

Spending two full days driving some of the accessible roads in the project area of interest, it was unsettling that I was unable to access about fifty percent of the project area due to game management gates being closed -on October 1st on the 2294, 2275 and the 2270 systems?!!??