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Organization:

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Comments: Sent from my iPad

Ruth D'Amico

Attn: Danika Carlson

Salmon / Scott Ranger District

11263 North Hwy 3

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Danika.carlson@usda.gov

Dear Danika and the Bear Country team,

Please accept these Bear Country Scoping comments on behalf of myself, David R. Jacques, and Donna Brucker, co-owners and residents of Blue Ridge Ranch, a private property, that is surrounded by this project. As longtime residents, who have witnessed the impact of fire and past management activities on the landscape, we hope that the chosen treatments will enhance, rather negatively impact the watershed we know and love so well.

We have read, and are in agreement with, the comments submitted by Kimberly Baker of KFA, and EPIC, KS Wild etal. Our comments are briefer and more specific to the areas we're most familiar with.

Blue Ridge Ranch [BRR] is surrounded by Forest Service land and is part of the wild land urban interface(WUI). The Project proposes to reduce wildfire threats to this property. We would support the methods referred to in the comments submitted by Ms. Baker [KFA]. This would include hand piling and/or mastication, where appropriate, hopefully to be followed up with prescribed fire.

Our northern property boundary abuts a pine plantation. Some of these units were masticated in 2018 and should have follow up treatment. Beyond these units there are extensive plantations above and below BRR that need thinning, removing excess trees following up with hand piling of slash, and hopefully, with low intensity prescribed fire. The plantations are predominately pine, where naturally this landscape is one of mixed Black Oak, Madrone and scattered conifers. Please consider opening up these plantations to greater conifer spacing allowing hardwoods and shrubs into the mix.

Directly to the east of BRR is a project site, bounded by the Eddy LSR, possibly unit 94, where activities are designated to promote forest health and resilience. This is an area of large diameter trees and superb wildlife habitat. Low intensity fire moved through this unit in 1987, taking out much of the ladder fuels, leaving predominately mature conifers, some with mistletoe further enhancing potential NSO habitat. It is currently inhabited and used by goshawks, great horned owls, fishers, bears and lions, etc. It should be noted that there is also a nesting pair of golden eagles. It seems to be a potential foraging area for Spotted Owls, as we've heard them there occasionally over the years. We entered into the edge of this area with FS wildlife biologists on one of

the field trips. We observed that it is in need of little, and maybe no, treatment. Possibly some thinning and hand piling of pockets would enhance the habitat. This is also one of the last remnant pockets of mature conifers in the mid slope East Fork of Indian Creek. It burned and was logged extensively below and above in the drainage. There is currently flagging designating a possible future road and landings. Entry into this area for commercial logging would be a detriment, as disturbances could jeopardize an expanding habitat. Not a good trade. It is in good shape now and needs very little or no treatment.

There is a meadow system on rd. 39N30 sec 21. This meadow, should not be entered except to reduce threats of wildfire, and to reduce encroachment of conifers of small diameter, ie. Meadow Enhancement. It is bordered by a naturally forested area with large to medium conifers and mixed hardwoods. There is a fairly closed canopy that should be treated for resilience, forest health, wildfire threat reduction. Weigh the brush component when considering treatment. Possibly some very select thinning could be done in the denser stand to the west, but once again, the need for retaining larger conifers should be paramount. Riparian areas flow throughout this little meadow system. It becomes quite wet and soggy in the wet months of the year. Consideration should be taken as to when treatment could be done, as previous winter/wet weather logging has been a detriment. We visited a few Meadow Enhancement areas. They are very different from one another, one being the above mentioned, the other on FH39, section 22. It's approximately 1/2 mile beyond BRR. What would the proposed action be to enhance them? One has not been entered into and has large diameter natural conifers. The other is surrounded by plantations that have recently been masticated.

Forest road 39, as well as other FS roads, serve as ingress and egress roads for firefighters, as well as in holders, and the general public. They should be maintained as mandated for the road designation. They have not been well maintained, endangering travelers and creating vehicular hazards. The Godfrey road FH 39N30, is an essential ingress egress for residents of Godfrey Ranch, and for us at Blue Ridge. In winter, it is the only way out. This road should be adequately maintained.

When considering these roads as fuel breaks, the larger diameter trees should be retained to maintain canopy cover, and to eventually create a shaded fuel b

Road 39, on the North fork side, below and around Picayune lake, consists of dense stands of mostly Doug Fir. Most are old plantations and some regrowth post 1987 fires. This would be a place to thin extensively, as it has been the fire path that burns up to the ridge, and slopes over into the South Fork of the Salmon, with Godfrey Ranch downslope. As we spoke of, during the field trip, this could be a great place to tie the road into the ridge fuel break system.

In conclusion, for this round of scoping and until USFS gets more specific about plans, my suggestion would be to do less "forest management" and more fire threat reduction. This area has been devastated by past practices and fire, give it a chance to continue to recover.

Sincerely,

David R. Jacques and Donna Brucker