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Comments: Scientific studies have found that the use of the herbicides glyphosate and triclopyr reduced the abundance of 40% to 56% of the lichen in the fungal network (Forest Ecology and Management, Volume 264, 15 January 2012, Pages 90-97). This is, of course, significant because this so called "wood-wide web" is essentially the circulatory system of the forest and a decrease in this network results in a decrease in nutrient exchange, thus weakening the ecosystem (NCBI/PMC, At the Root of the Wood Wide Web, Self Recognition and Non-Self Incompatibility in Mycorrhizal Networks, Plant Signal Behav. 2006 Jan-Feb; 1(1): 1-5).

Similarly, extreme tree thinning and clear cutting has an equally deleterious effect on the forest ecosystem as a whole, reducing the number of individual trees and thereby diminishing the nutrient and microbial exchange between and amongst plant species (Physiological Responses Of Paper Birch To Thinning In British Columbia (Forest Ecology and Management Volume 73, Issues 1-3, May 1995, Pages 177-184).

Put simply, I am concerned that both these practices might prove antithetical to maintaining/improving the health of the forest.

I am keen that the science that the Forest Service is using to make decisions about logging and herbicide applications for our region takes into full account all the illuminating research of recent years when addressing the needs of our lands. I fervently hope that you will look before you leap because our planet and our citizens depend on you to do so. As you well know, unduly interfering with the natural processes of ecosystems can have ramifications that last for generations.

Thank you for considering my comments concerning the Foothills Landscape Project Environmental Assessment.

- Harlan Collins