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First name: Riley

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I am asking as a local community member of this portion of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest that you reconsider the proposed logging project along the North Fork Nooksack River. This area is very precious to me and many others, including the local ecosystems and salmon habitats along this portion of the river and downstream. There are many points that I believe are very important as to why this project must be reconsidered. Local communities will see negative impacts by the destruction of their local wilderness area and recreation sites. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be conducted due to the huge scale of proposed logging in this proposal, which I must say is a radical departure from previous Forest Service management directive. This is an extremely drastic amount of land that is proposed to be logged and this will diminish the livelihood of many people who thrive and spend their days in this local wilderness area, not to mention destroy the habitats of the local animals and wildlife that live and survive in these forested areas. By removing this many trees from the North Fork Nooksack and it's tributaries, you are removing precious salmon habitat (fallen trees) where young fish may take refuge. You are also creating an opportunity for landslides from logged areas to dump mud into these waters and choke salmon eggs; in addition, you will increase the temperature of the water of the streams nearby whose cold temperatures are essential to the survival of cold water salmon. The increased risk of wildfires from clear-cut land can adversely effect the health and safety of our local communities.

The Forest Service must fully weigh the importance of this National Forest for reducing the existential dangers of climate change to both our regional ecosystems and human communities. Logging these forests defeats their carbon sequestration potential for decades to come, which is an increasingly important issue to combat due to the increase in our local and global carbon footprint. As stated from the Forest Service's webpage the Climate Change Resource Center section Options for Management: "Some of the most defensible options for managing forests for their carbon storage are (1) Keep forests as forests (avoid deforestation), including active regeneration of frequent fire forests subjected to crown fires where natural regeneration may take centuries." In addition, "Harvesting old-growth forests for their forest products is not an effective carbon conservation strategy because the carbon remaining in the wood products plus the regrowth are not enough to compensate for the loss of large carbon stocks in the intact forests."

In the face of extensive and ongoing clearcutting operations on private and state timberlands nearby, the Forest Service must prioritize allowing our National Forest to mature naturally for carbon capture. Allowing the natural maturation also allows for more clean water, which is a very important resource for our communities. These areas are also where we love to recreate, and occupying and removing these spaces will be detrimental to our communities. There are already too many logging projects happening in nearby areas near Glacier, WA, Middle Fork Road, Sumas Mountain, and other areas off of highway 542. Adding another logging project will only decrease the amount of recreation opportunities for locals and will potentially diminish their mental health because they will not have their local recreation site available.

The Forest Service must also not construct new logging roads, including so-called "temporary" roads, which act as vectors for invasive weeds and human-caused abuses (including fires), while fragmenting habitat. With increasing temperatures yearly, Washington State has seen an increase in wildfires in Eastern and Western portions of the state. I have lived in western WA my entire life, and have never seen wildfires on the scale we recently have seen before. It effected my income from working at an outdoor restaurant, effected my happiness because I could not recreate when there was too much smoke around, and affected my health by not being able to go outside and when I was able to, I had to inhale smoke constantly. Increasing the likelihood of wildfires is a threat to our local communities of Whatcom and Skagit counties.

Sincerely,
Riley Berens