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First name: Katlyn

Last name: Pickett

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please consider the vital task of completing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

More Information is needed. What are you truly trying to accomplish with this timber sale? Is this a guise simply saying that the main objectives are to create a healthy ecosystem for shrubs and other pioneering species while preserving habitat for certain ESA listed birds and wildlife? Is this the best plan of action to go about achieving that end result? What other measures aside from clearcutting and commercial thinning are there to consider to attain a similar outcome? Ones that don't involve the construction of more roads? A known vector for invasive plants and weeds and increased fire danger as well as soil erosion from hydrological runoff or hazards.

My first time visiting the region was on a drive up 542 and day hike in the MBSNF. That was the impetus to promptly move here and become very active in the outdoor recreation community and trail organizations. This valley is an area whose welfare I care for immensely. I bring many out-of-town friends and family members to the MBSNF area so they can appreciate our natural wonders. Clearcutting will leave very visible and lasting scars from higher elevations on popular hikes such as Church Mountain. Is this the first and lasting impression we want to give visitors and enthusiasts to our forests?

Tourism and recreation are a very viable opportunity going forward. The Bellingham Herald reported that in 2016, "visitors spent 588 million in Whatcom County, a 3 percent increase compared to 2015. Whatcom County now ranks fifth in the state for visitor spending after King, Pierce, Spokane and Snohomish Counties." Those counties also have easy access to National Forests that encourages outdoor recreation and tourism. The data was compiled by Dean Runyan Associates, a national tourism research firm. The report went on to estimate that, "visitor spending supported 6,800 Whatcom County jobs, last year, an increase of 200 compared to 2015. Visitor spending also generated about \$51 million in state and local taxes."

The economic prosperity of the local community would be best served by recreation and tourism dollars rather than a few jobs gained with money from log sales going to big outside companies. It has more value being left to grow and mature. People come to this county for these scenic places. They will continue to do so in increasing numbers. That will be a benefit to our economy and communities. We must allow these forests to remain intact and expand where appropriate recreational opportunities in our national forests. They can and should be used as a means for carbon sequestration. Instead of only adding them up for the sum of their extraction potential they can be put to work as critical habitat for animals, protection of waterways as well as a refuge for the soul. Is this the best use we can be putting these ear-marked areas towards going forward? The last several decades we have shifted away from the previous policies of our century-long history of a heavily extraction-based economy. Can we move beyond that? Can MBSNF be a model in fostering and maintaining maturing forest types across its holdings?

In 2018 this project was called NICE (Nooksack Integrated Conservation and Enhancement Project), and it included a few positive conservation and recreation projects that the timber revenue would have funded. Where are those original concessions? Why were they stripped away from the current plan? That's not very nice. I can support an ethical, scientific approach to a positive forest management plan but without an environmental impact study I cannot be sure that the scoping notice of this project has the continued best interests of the environment, this very specific ecosystem, the nearby communities or residents of the region in mind.