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The North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project scope comes as a huge surprise to me. For years, there have been responsible plans for harvesting timber that have struck an acceptable compromise between the use of trees as a renewable resource and the need to conserve the delicate ecosystems that are home to countless species of animals. The proposed plan will have a direct impact on me and my family, as we are residents of this area, as well as the surrounding communities. I'm deeply concerned about the environmental impact as well as the potential impact on climate change. This is our home. I insist that a complete environmental impact survey be completed to fully understand the risk this plan poses to all residents, human and animal, of this beautiful area.

I see no mention of climate change in the scope of the plan despite the obvious risk to our local and regional ecosystems and the families that live in this area. Buotte, et al.'s "Carbon sequestration and biodiversity co-benefits of preserving forests in the western USA" through Oregon State University, published in Ecological Applications in 2019. The authors conclude that preserving temperate forests in the western U.S. (including the MBSNF) that have medium to high potential carbon sequestration and low future climate vulnerability could account for a third of the global mitigation potential identified for temperate and boreal forests.

The proposed project is in direct opposition to this evidence by pushing for extensive removal of trees and deforestation through "stand replacement." Furthermore, I'm deeply concerned about the extensive carbon emissions associated with logging and moving timber. As a resident of the North Fork of the Nooksack River, I'm surprised to learn that the Forest Service would consider subjecting me and my family and neighbors to the increased risk of climate change, directly affecting the air we breathe and the peace we enjoy from day to day.

It is essential that an Environmental Impact Survey be completed to address the following additional concerns:

There is already a massive amount of seral habitat immediately west of the project area due to clearcut logging and more is being created with each passing year. What we need to preserve are functionally mature forests, which are becoming increasingly rare due to clearcutting practices.

LSR zoning is set aside to provide core habitats for the northern spotted owl and marbled Murrelet. I'm confused and deeply disturbed by the proposal to farm huckleberries in the LSR which is in direct opposition to the intention of this zoning under the Northwest Forest Plan.

The Forest Service's intent to connect roads 3120-035 and 3132 in order to avoid the Jim Creek slide would be inadvisable. Any management activity much benefit the forest and this would only serve to divide it and invite invasive weeds to flourish and put the survival of murrelets at risk due to increased predator activity.

The second paragraph of page 2 of the scoping notice specifically prioritizes the need to prevent fires and protect native species, but new road construction would achieve precisely the opposite. New roads would only increase access to humans who are the primary cause of wildfires. This is a tourist area with a high volume of visitors and any additional access leaves the forest vulnerable to those passing through, preventing recovery and restoration. This area has always been vulnerable to fires and increasing the chance that this could occur is irresponsible and puts the residents of this area, both human and animal, at extreme risk. Any thinning of the forest should be limited to only what can be accessed by the existing roads.

Thinning of forests is always harmful to ecosystems, disturbing the delicate balance of the habitat. Once disturbed it can't be restored to its original state. Species must adapt to these changes and many can no longer be supported in this changed environment. Though it may be argued that it is less destructive than clearcutting, it is not an acceptable alternative and still carries great risk.

Another concern is the extensive network of spur roads in the N. Fork Nooksack watershed as part of this project. This was not addressed in the proposed ATM plan and I recommend the decommissioning of all unnecessary road spurs.

I'm deeply concerned that the proposed trailhead expansions would involve the clearing of the surrounding native forest within the LSR. This would be in opposition to the guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan for this particular zoning. Any expansion would lead to additional visitation which would quickly become obsolete and then might justify further expansion, and therefore further destruction of the surrounding forest. Where would this end? Additional traffic also means additional risk of wildfires. I recommend a more efficient design that utilizes only the existing boundaries of the trailheads, parking along shoulders, or a shuttle system to accommodate the increase in visitation, for example.

The replacement of the Thompson Creek Bridge may be the only action associated with this project that would not result in the degradation of the North Fork Nooksack watershed.

In conclusion, I love my home. I've lived in Whatcom County my entire life. I moved to the Nooksack River area two years ago because of its beauty and because of abundant wildlife that lives here. My family and I would be devastated to see this project move forward. I insist that a full Environmental Impact Survey be completed as I'm sure it will reveal the need to radically change the existing plan. Thank you for your willingness to listen to our comments and consider the point of view of the residents of this area.