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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mt. Baker District Ranger Uloth,

As a resident of Eastern Whatcom County and frequent visitor to the ranger district, I believe the 2018 plan for forest restoration and improved habitat for fish, as well as protection and enhancement of wildlife corridors, was on the right track. Now suddenly there is this proposal for clear cutting large steep areas, creating more roads, and surely silting up the North Fork, where so much has been done the last few years, so expensively, to increase salmon habitat and runs. Why damage all that? This designated Key 1 watershed provides critical habitat for threatened fish species. It also contains roughly 1700 acres of spotted owl habitat, and a place for our local elk herd to hopefully regenerate.

As a member of Conservation Northwest, I support comprehensive restoration actions to improve forest health and ecological resilience in the North Fork Nooksack River watershed, including careful thinning of dense, young plantations to increase structural diversity, removing unnecessary roads, improving conditions for fish and wildlife, and enhancing recreation site access. But I strongly oppose this 1,900-acre clearcut around Canyon Creek that was recently proposed. Canyon Creek is an important North Fork Nooksack tributary known for floods and landslides, and is home to Endangered Species Act-listed Chinook salmon and steelhead as well as bull trout.

*** Nearly the entire area proposed for clear-cutting is classified by scientists as high risk for landslides and erosion, and is therefore designated as a Riparian Reserve where timber harvest is prohibited. Rain on snow events in the recent past have caused extensive damage, costing millions to repair.***

Given the extensively degraded aquatic conditions in Canyon Creek, there is a great opportunity here to reduce road densities that drive sediment delivery and flooding, improve large tree and old-growth habitat in riparian and lower elevations, reduce old forest habitat fragmentation, improve wildlife habitat, and increase ecological resilience to climate change (see Canyon Creek watershed analysis). These objectives, which align closely with the Nooksack Integrated Restoration and Enhancement Project, should be the priority actions for Canyon Creek and elsewhere in the Nooksack, not a massive clearcut.

Please reduce the forest road density in deer and elk winter range to two miles of road per square mile of area or less to improve habitat security, and look for other opportunities to reduce the road network in the North Fork Nooksack watershed. I am sure you have read about the increase in poaching and illegal use of military weaponry and advanced seeking devices to shoot anything that moves. More roads allow more desecration and violations. There are nearly 60 miles of roads that threaten aquatic ecosystem health that should be considered for removal through this project.

Please act on the side of carbon sequestration and planning for climate change. Yes that includes fire management but this proposal is not what it is claiming to be and will be a huge step backward.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments.