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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Honorable Officials,

Please accept this letter as a public comment concerning the proposed amendment to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as outlined in the Public Scoping Letter dated 1 June 2020. I am a Bellingham resident who spends a great deal of time out the Mount Baker Scenic Byway corridor, hiking, photographing, and being with Nature.

Given the popularity of Forest Road 39 on the way to the Heliotrope Ridge Trail, it makes good sense to replace the Thompson Creek Bridge. However thinning (logging) in the higher elevation region of Road 39 could scar this most highly traveled corridor to the high country on the southwest flanks of Mount Baker.

Additionally, the proposed thinning (logging) on the south flank of Church Mountain, to the southeast of Nooksack Falls, and to the north of the Mount Baker Scenic Byway near milepost 43-46 range is of significant concern. Around mile 44 of the highway is a precious zone of old growth trees, vital for the flora and fauna abundant there and for the spiritual sustenance of long-time Whatcom County residents who regularly retreat to this wilderness oasis. Many of us refer to this zone as the Old Trees or the Grandmother Trees, stands comprised of ancient Douglas Fir and Red Cedar. These ancestor trees deserve to continue living until the end of their life cycle.

The Mount Baker Scenic Byway corridor is primary to the quality of life for Whatcom County residents. How much will Whatcom County residents benefit economically from this Forest Plan, and for how long will that benefit endure? We must measure benefit in terms of the life of the large trees themselves, which is hundreds of years, rather than what benefit there may be for the next few years. Does this Forest Plan truly benefit our children and the generations to follow? I do not think so.

How many organizations that have advocated for the northern spotted owl or the marbled murrelet, such as the Audubon Society, are fully supportive of this Forest Plan?

It is sad that this project could scar the heart of our Cascadian backyard in Whatcom County, especially when so much land closer to saltwater in the county continues to be cleared for economic development. I urge the Forest Service to allow our forests to mature naturally, for the important benefits of clean water, carbon capture, habitat preservation, and recreation.

Thank you kindly for receiving these comments concerning the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project.