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First name: Mr.

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project

Dear District Ranger Uloth,

Natural forests have always had some level of natural disturbance, fire, slides, windfall events and even here in the Northwest lahar events from volcanoes. These events give diversity in the landscape, offer early seral states in one part with older more mature stands in other areas.

Past land use was not always the best and one of the things that has hurt the diversity is an even aged monoculture of Douglas-fir and hemlock. These stands were harvested and reforested yet today are in a stem exclusion stage (largely stagnant) as they have reached carrying capacity for the forest as it stands and needs active management in many locations to restore diversity that in itself will create a diversity of habitats for a wider variety of plant and animal species.

What is needed is thinning in some areas, clearcut harvest in others, and even allowing prescribed burns in others to help mimic what was there originally. Landscapes have been created to allow for the diversity, often following natural land features as topographic ridges stopping a fire or windfall all the while opening up open sections of the forest for early seral stages essential in production of forage for many species, deer, rabbits, mice, forest grouse, native songbirds, bobcat, bear, and a whole host of other wildlife species all benefit from the forage created by these openings, manmade or natural. Allowing overgrown huckleberry that is large and woody to have a low heat controlled burn would help set those areas back to a more natural early seral stage where huckleberry, eldeberry and a whole host of other fruit and seed producing plant species can provide forage for a whole host of wildlife species.

A forest in the stagnant stage is not growing, at risk of disease and pest outbreaks, puts a high fuel load on the forest where fires that come through are hot enough to destroy soil and the organics in the soils and plant communities have a difficult time becoming established and slides then occur causing impacts to water quality and ESA -listed fish stocks.

A managed forest with good planning and done with a landscape perspective are essential for making a forest fit for a diverse flora and fauna and will provide people a safe and wonderful place to enjoy nature.

This comment is to support the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project and the plan to use various forest management tools to ensure a healthier and more resilient forest. In addition to providing timber to support our communities, this project will also make these public lands more accessible to all forest users. Vegetation management will support native plant and animal species who will benefit from the creation of both early-seral habitat and older mixed age and species forests.

Timber harvest and commercial thinning will help achieve the objectives of this project. Commercial activities will provide the funding necessary to fix deteriorating forest roads as well as to support non-commercial restoration work on the national forest. Generating revenue, improving access, and enhancing huckleberry production are positive steps the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest can take in meeting its management goals.

Please move forward with this project, using the various forest management tools that are available to the Forest. This project will benefit all the various uses of our forests, benefit local communities and the various wildlife using the Forest.

Sincerely,

Wayne Watne