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Organization:

Title:

Comments: North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project

Dear District Ranger Uloth,

We support the project's purposes, which we consider to be to:

*Produce commercial yields of timber from Matrix lands.

*Accelerate the development of old-growth forest characteristics on Late Successional Reserves

*Accelerate the achievement of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy on Riparian Reserves.

*Enhance and maintain huckleberry productivity, in addition to early seral habitat and forage

*Maintain a safe and efficient transportation network.

*Implement restoration actions to improve aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

We also want to ensure that economic benefit is focal point of the project's purpose and need, on par with the rest of the resources benefited by the action- i.e., not to just contribute to, but strengthen the local and regional economy.

We agree that the project should be analyzed in an EA to determine if there are any significant impacts, prior to making a decision on level of analysis at the EIS level.

We applaud you for including huckleberry restoration activities in this proposal. We believe it beneficial to open up the area; provide cultural value; has economic value for commercial and recreational pickers; improves berry availability including for traditional uses; and benefits multiple plant and animal species. We ask that you analyze a robust maintenance regimen to maintain the desired open conditions onsite. We encourage you to use practices identified within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Huckleberry Management Strategy (Hudec 2018) "to develop a multi-year, self-sustaining huckleberry habitat restoration program on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest that will lead to increased huckleberry production and improvement to local forest community economies" (p.2). We also support developing an action alternative that analyzes the effects of harvest in place of "drop and leave." To achieve the same desired conditions proposed in MA 19.

We ask that you consider removing all merchantable material and leave only precommercial sizes and tops on the forest floor. We have discussed previously with the Forest's sales administrator (in a Segelsen 1 post harvest field tour) the opportunity to allow for the taking of blowdown during the contract period, in addition to leaving only the smallest/non-commercial material onsite/in place or piled. Consideration of allowing for taking a specified percentage of blowdown will improve the economic benefit of the project, especially in matrix and within other thinned stands outside this allocation where allowable.

In regard to roads, we encourage you to consider creating some optional road improvements that occur only if the economic benefits support these improvements. Optional items could be covered in a contract outside of the timber sale contract to increase the project's economic feasibility. Please consult with industry experts to ensure project designs ensure the economic viability of the project.

When decommissioning roads post-harvest, we encourage you to first consider ML-1 closure which can minimize or eliminate resource risks while preserving future road use for management as needed.

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,

Anjolene Price