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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments on North Fork Nooksack Project #58218.

Dear Mt. Baker District Ranger Uloth,

I'm writing to provide scoping comments and to state my strongest support for the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project #58218. It is time to stop delaying protections for this area.

Especially at this climate-critical time I demand that Washington State make it a priority policy to have in place comprehensive restoration actions to improve forest health and ecological resilience in the North Fork Nooksack River watershed.

These actions must include careful, scientifically oriented thinning of dense, young plantations that are vulnerable to fire in order to increase structural diversity, remove unnecessary roads, improve conditions for fish and wildlife, and enhance recreation site access.

The North Fork Nooksack watershed contains vast old-growth forests with more than 1,700 acres of critical Spotted Owl habitat, the struggling remnant Nooksack elk herd, prime mountain-goat habitat, and key wildlife corridors facilitating safe movement between the Forest, Wilderness areas and the larger transboundary area, including wildlands in Canada. This designated Key 1 watershed also provides critical habitat for threatened fish species.

Habitats like this take countless years to grow and mature, and must not be left open to unaccountable corporate profiteering or other actions, like electric bike trails.

I am disgusted to hear of and profoundly oppose the recently proposed massive 1,900-acre clearcut around Canyon Creek. The destruction of this area by unaccountable private corporate interests would destroy trees that are the lungs that keep our environment healthy..

Canyon Creek is an important North Fork Nooksack tributary already known for floods and landslides that clear-cutting would massively increase. In turn, these waters are also 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 thus is specifically 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. Destroying the forest would both increase those costs and decimate the forest's wildlife.

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 essential Nooksack Integrated Restoration and Enhancement Project, should be the priority actions for Canyon Creek and elsewhere in the Nooksack, not a massive private, one-time, irresponsible 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 while responsibly and sustainably supporting outdoor recreation accommodations. Nearly 60 miles of roads in this area already threaten aquatic ecosystem health, and these must be considered for removal through this project.

Please act ethically and quickly to hold your ground in the North Fork Nooksack, and reject all clearcutting.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments,

Sigrid Asmus