

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/30/2020 7:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments on North Fork Nooksack Project #58218.

Dear Mt. Baker District Ranger Uloth,

After spending about 15 minutes searching online for a "public comment for North Fork Nooksack Vegetation" page on the USFS website, I gave up trying. I am baffled that after typing in multiple key word searches, I found only the July, 2016, 242 page document, about which I am contacting you via Conservation Northwest. Truly, I am lost as to why it is so difficult to find a USFS page for the purpose of receiving public comment. I hope you will follow up on that gap in communication opportunities.

Needless to say, I'm writing to provide scoping comments for the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project #58218, and, yes, I will utilize the language provided by Conservation NW, as I agree wholeheartedly with it.

The 2018 plan was multi-faceted and far more ecologically relevant to the needs of forest ecosystems and stakeholder groups than the current 2020 plan.

To be clear, I support the 2018 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, decreasing the decaying forest road network to a more sustainable level, improving stream health and the overall watershed to better support endangered fish populations, and repairing trailheads and other recreational accommodations to better serve communities wishing to enjoy this beautiful forest, and more.

This designated Key 1 watershed provides critical habitat for threatened fish species, and it is common knowledge that habitat destruction and degradation caused by relentless clear cutting of our forests over the past 130 years is the number one cause of declining and extinct salmon runs.

I strongly oppose the massive 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 while responsibly and sustainably supporting outdoor recreation accommodations. There are nearly 60 miles of roads that threaten aquatic ecosystem health that should be considered for removal

through this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments,

Susan Rooney