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Organization:

Title:

Comments: North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project #58218

Dear Mt. Baker District Ranger Uloth,

This email is regarding the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project #58218.

While I support restoration actions to improve forest health in the North Fork Nooksack River watershed, including careful thinning of dense, removing unnecessary roads, improving conditions for fish and wildlife, and enhancing recreation site access, I strongly oppose the massive 1,900-acre clearcut around Canyon Creek that was recently proposed.

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.

This entire area is valued greatly for recreation by a diverse spread of user groups from hunters to hikers. Commercial logging is a necessary trade, and as hobby woodworker and part time carpenter, I personally support sustainable logging. However, there are many areas in Whatcom and Skagit county where logging is more appropriate. I spend much of my time on logging roads in DNR and private logging land and would hate to see that scene played out in an area where I go to seek a wilderness experience. The value of a recreation area like that found on Mt Baker Highway is significantly higher than the timber value. People travel to this region from around the country to recreate in the foothills and mountains that are within the Mt Baker Snoqualmie National Forest. Many businesses are based around access and recreation to this area in its current state.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments,

Ian Vermeeren, RN