

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,

I'm writing to provide comments for the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project #58218.

I support long-term planning to improve forest health in the North Fork Nooksack River watershed. Selective thinning and sustainable harvest can be done in a way that supports many needs - our economy, improving conditions for fish and wildlife, and enhancing recreational opportunities. It is short sighted to not consider all of these critical components that our public forests provides.

The North Fork Nooksack watershed contains vast old-growth forests and critical habitats, clear cutting is not acceptable in this area, it will cause too much irreparable harm. 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. With climate change we can anticipate even bigger events, which will be costly and make us less resilient.

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.

Finally, please consider the importance of these forests to me and other Whatcom county residents. We choose to live here exactly because of the quality and integrity of forests surrounding our community. There will be public outcry if you proceed with this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments,

JULIE Morse