

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/15/2020 7:00:00 AM

First name: Kerie

Last name: Raymond

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Shane Jeffries, Forest Supervisor, Ochoco National Forest:

I want the Forest Service to maintain protections for all large trees over 21" on Central and Eastern Oregon National Forests. After too many decades of overgrazing, fire suppression, and logging, our forests are in need of restoration. Preserving big trees is crucial to restoration efforts, as big trees provide habitat for wildlife, keep soils healthy, keep water clean and cold, and store carbon pollution. Forest managers already have the ability to design projects to restore forest health without removing protections for big trees.

The Wildlife Standard of the Eastside Screens is just two decades old and has only begun its work to restore late, old structure forests. I envision a future with large swaths of old-growth forest throughout Central and Eastern Oregon, and the Wildlife Standard is critical to achieving that vision. I prefer a numerical standard that ensures all big trees >21" in diameter will be preserved, not the proposed guideline that puts our biggest trees at risk.

When the Eastside Screens were adopted, a broader holistic review of eastside forest policy was promised but the Forest Service has not delivered on that promise. The Draft Environmental Assessment fails to disclose the far-reaching effects of this significant revision to the Eastside Screens. How will the preferred alternative affect all sensitive species and management indicator species that need big trees? How will it affect the carbon storage capability of our forests? How will it impact water quality and fish habitat? How will it affect dry forests versus moist-mixed conifer forests? How will it affect the recruitment of future big trees, snags, and downed wood? At a minimum, I request an EIS that discloses these and other significant environmental effects.

Oregonians deeply value our public lands, and especially our big trees and the wildlife they support. The proposed weakening of the Wildlife Standard of the Eastside Screens is at odds with these values, and I urge you to abandon this proposal and pursue other more pressing restoration needs on our National Forests.

Sincerely,

Kerie Raymond