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Organization:

Title:

Comments: This email is in regard to the Twisp River Restoration project. We live in the Wolf Creek drainage, just outside of the boundaries of the Twisp River project. We live in, enjoy and make use of the forest and woodlands covered by the Twisp River project, as well as those in our "backyard" that are in the Wolf Creek drainage outside of the project's boundaries. We see on a daily basis the effects of the "treatment" that was made by commercial logging in the BLM land that was completed last year on Virginia Ridge.

I agree with the Forest Service commitment to restore/improve the condition of this region's forests and landscape. However, I fervently believe the goals should be pursued with an equally focused attention on preserving the quality of the forest and landscape for non-intrusive visitors, wildlife, and natural vegetation. Modern logging technology, as practiced on the Virginia Ridge BLM sites, was very destructive to the vegetation and soil due to the extensive use of extremely heavy machinery. I am not a professional forester or land manager but I find it hard to believe that commercial logging practices with this type of equipment does not cause long-term damage to the wildlife habitat and the recovery of the natural vegetation.

Prior to the approval of the Virginia Ridge treatment the public was given maps of the roads that would be improved and/or newly constructed during the treatment process. However, we were not informed that the heavy equipment would go everywhere regardless of the presence of such designated roadways. This led to logging tracks up extremely steep hillsides irrespective of the presence of roads, leading to potential erosion and damage to the understory everywhere. If this type of logging is practiced in burnt areas, the damage will be even greater because of the absence or lesser density of ground cover.

I am particularly against two policies in the tentative proposal: the removal of larger trees (anything less than 30 inches rather than less than 20 inches) and the opening-up of extensive areas to All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). Allowing access to ATVs in the Twisp Restoration Area will open the area for their use not only on designated roads and trails but also to their illegal use anywhere the rider can go. This can be seen in many areas in the Wolf Creek area, especially after the recent "treatment" process that opened up the area by providing newly-constructed and improved access roads. They have ridden ATVs to the top of the knob on Virginia Ridge, above the old quarry, despite the absence of a road.

Last year my wife and I hiked in Twisp Restoration area up the South Fork valley from the parking lot on the Twisp River Road to Stehekin, going over Twisp Pass en route to Lake Chelan. The middle section of the hike up to the pass was badly damaged by fire a few years back. Below and above that area the valley was a pristine example of wilderness. The upper sections are characterized by old stands of fir and spruce. We met other hikers and horseback rider who came from as far away as Montana to enjoy this unspoiled area. These and other areas in the Twisp and Wolf River drainages should be protected from salvage logging. Wildfires will occur but they are a natural means of thinning and improving forest health. Harvesting the fire-damaged trees would cause irreparable damage to the soil and vegetation, open the areas to damaging access by motorized vehicles, and discourage non-destructive access by backpackers, day hikers and horsemen.

Please keep me informed of opportunities for public comment on these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Young