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First name: James

Last name: Varner

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Twisp Restoration Project Comments

Dear Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Supervisor Bail,

I'm writing to provide comments on the Twisp Restoration Project environmental analysis #56554.

I support comprehensive forest and aquatic restoration to improve forest health and ecological resilience in the Twisp River watershed, as was done in the Mission Restoration Project, such as maintaining and restoring large and old tree populations, careful understory thinning-from-below of the younger trees, removing unnecessary roads, improving conditions for fish and wildlife habitat, and restoring periodic fire for ecological resilience.

The Twisp River is a unique and special place. It is the first place wolves were documented breeding in Washington state when they returned, and where imperiled spotted owls were last detected in the valley. It is home to wolverines, Canada lynx, moose, mule deer, mountain goats, Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout and an array of other fish and wildlife. It includes portions of the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness Area, the Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area, Late-successional and Riparian Reserves, the Wolf Creek Research Natural Area, and critical habitat for spotted owls and other endangered species.

I strongly oppose plans to cut large (>20" diameter) fire resilient trees and trees over 10" in roadless areas, bulldozing trees in old-growth areas, salvage logging in Reserves and roadless areas, Riparian logging especially along the valley bottom, excessive shaded fuelbreaks, and logging in the ecologically functional Upper Twisp sub-watershed, including quality spotted owl habitat.

Please remove these elements from the Twisp Forest Restoration Project; they are not supported by either science or the local community. Protect all old trees (>150 years old) regardless of size and species. Protect recreation and existing recreational trails by avoiding or leaving a buffer around existing recreational trails. Given the Project's massive scale, scope and complexity, I request you provide appropriate limits and monitoring where "condition-based management" is proposed, and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to assess whether an ecological need exists for careful restoration actions in roadless areas, Reserves, and elsewhere. Please show how the proposed actions adhere to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest's restoration strategy, and exactly where logging and other activities will be located and why. Environmental review must address site-specific impacts. Fire threats from extensive logging slash will be addressed in the analysis as well as impacts to outdoor recreation interests and neighboring communities and residents from logging-related traffic and other disruptions over the next 30 years.

Generally I request that you work with the North Central Washington Forest Collaborative and the Methow Valley community to reduce the Project's scope, scale, and negative environmental impacts.

The Twisp Project has some good elements. I support the aquatic restoration actions including significant road decommissioning, placement of large wood in streams, beaver dam analogs, and culvert and stream crossing improvements. The plans for large prescribed fires and maintenance burns are commendable. With the changes proposed above, the Project could improve wildlife habitat and landscape conditions, and gain public support.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Twisp Forest Restoration Project.

James Varner

pronouns: he, him, his

Rainshadow Running

Destination Races & Running Adventures

Instagram

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The Trail Running Film Festival

Trail Movies, Fun and Friends

Instagram

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