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Comments: Over the past forty years I have often visited the North Fork of the Nooksack River to enjoy the many opportunities for recreation, skiing, hiking, back packing and mountain climbing. Also, I am a retired professional road engineer and I participated as a volunteer in the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest's Sustainable Roads initiative. I have reviewed with alarm and horror the recent released Environmental Assessment (EA) for the North Fork Nooksack River Vegetation Management Project #58218.

This ridiculous and incomplete EA should be immediately withdrawn. The EA fails to comply with the basic requirement of the NEPA in that a) it doesn't present a "No Action" alternative as a basis for comparison of the impacts of proposed action alternatives and b) the proposed action alternatives are so broad, 3,000 acres logging, 62 miles of road building and long term, fifteen years, that a detailed full Environment Impact Statement (EIS) is required. The spurious so-called Purpose and Need for the project is based on the 1990 long outdated Forest Plan. The Forest Service approaches this project to "improve" the forest as if they were Capability Brown naturalizing the gardens at Blenheim Palace.

The nonsensical notion that habitat improvement for the endangered species of marbled murrelet and spotted owls can be achieved by clearcutting nearly 3,000 acres of late successional reserves (LSR) and Matrix trees, while totally disregarding the disruption and fragmentation of fifteen years of road building and logging is farcical on the face of it.

The proposal to "improve" the forest in the Canyon Creek watershed is ludicrous. The area is characterized by steep, unstable slope consisting of easily erodible loose soils. Removing the protective vegetation and building roads will result in mass wasting into the stream channel and choking the salmon gravel spawning beds with fine silts.

Mount Baker Snoqualmie NF has 2,500 miles of roads on the forest. In recent years the budget has supported maintenance for only 25% or 625 miles of these roads. Most of the remainder has been closed and categorized as level 1 storage. This EA proposes to activate 62 miles of road to support logging operations. The reasoning or rather lack of reason becomes absurd with the circular argument for road building. "The roads must be built/maintained to allow logging trucks to haul away the logs cut, which must be cut, and the timber sold in order to pay for the roads," and so back around to where it began. Forest and watershed protection can best be served by leaving the trees in the woods and closing and decommissioning the existing and unused roads.

No matter how euphemistically the proposed actions in the EA are described, they are clearly recognized as logging. This is made very clear by the proposals to remove large mature trees, those that are commercially valuable. While those are the very trees that should be retained in a mature forest. The proposed commercial logging flies in the very face of the stated need to restore terrestrial and aquatic processes to the ecosystem. It appears that nature is in fact doing very well at that and the best human intervention would be no action except to close and decommission the unneeded and unused roads.

I urge you once again to withdraw this very poorly written and blatantly illegal EA. It is ludicrous to pretend that this totally inadequate EA addresses and evaluates the numerous and cumulative impacts of the proposed actions. If the Forest Service is going to proceed in this misguided attempt to log the North Fork of the Nooksack River watershed a full blown EIS will be required. However, I don't believe that any vegetation management is required to restore ecology function that is best left alone.