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Title:
Comments: [External Email]Bear Country Environmental Assessment

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Dear Forest Supervisor Danika Carlson,

The Salmon River is the beautiful jewel of the Klamath National Forest.

The rugged mature forest slopes of the river canyon are unparalleled not only in their beauty but their importance as intact habitat and climate refuge. The Bear Country area and its inhabitants, like the last stronghold of wild salmon in the Klamath River, deserve the highest priority for long-term preservation and recovery. The proposed project could significantly harm the human, aquatic and wildlife communities in these watersheds.

I understand the importance of protecting communities in wildfire events, that is why I support the portions of the Bear Country project that will better prepare these rural neighborhoods for fire events, like plantation thinning, prescribed burning and small diameter vegetation treatments along strategic ingress/egress roads.

I am strongly opposed to the 3,700 acres of logging in mature forests, especially the removal 223 acres of nesting and roosting habitat and 700 acres of foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl "in perpetuity." This should not be allowed, particularly in Critical Habitat or in the Eddy Gulch Late Successional Reserve. I am opposed to the nearly 800 acres of Riparian Reserve logging in this key watershed that serves as vital refuge for at-risk salmon. Further, the proposed -15 miles of "temporary" road reconstruction, the estimated 5 miles of new road construction, the creation of 19 new log landings, the 2,271 acres of mastication on 24.4 miles of remote ridgeline and the use of excavators to reopen previous dozerlines -would all increase habitat fragmentation and long-term degradation in these last fire resilient mature forests that serve as a stronghold for threatened and endangered species. The Bear Country project would also impact scenic values in the Wild and Scenic Salmon River corridor and degrade the Black Inventoried Roadless Area.

The Salmon/Scott River Ranger District needs to prioritize treatment areas that are manageable and maintainable before disrupting and degrading more key watersheds and mature forests. For instance, the adjacent Jess project fuels treatments still fail to be implemented, as does much of the prescribed burning proposed in the Eddy Gulch LSR and other projects on the district. The final EA should focus on thinning flammable plantations and vegetation treatments on strategic roads and around homes.

The Bear Country watersheds are critical for wild coho and chinook, pacific fishers, goshawk and one of the last remaining strongholds for the Northern spotted owl. We are all experiencing biodiversity and climate emergency, please protect this last remaining refugia by maintaining mature forest habitat and connectivity. Please reconsider and choose an alternative that will keep older fire resilient trees and forest canopy intact and focus the project on treatments that are manageable and maintainable.

Sincerely,
Jessica Heiden
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