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Comments: [External Email]Bear Country Environmental Assessment

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Dear Forest Supervisor Danika Carlson,

I strongly oppose this enormous logging project that will destroy the living land, degrade watersheds, and despoil habitat for many species, including the spotted owl and Chinook and coho salmon. This project is a perfect example of how the timber industry (with its partners that profit off logging, such as the US Forest Service) are using wildfires to justify cutting down more trees under the justification of "fuel reduction," "vegetation management," and "thinning," which all mean one thing: logging.

Down to the specifics, I oppose 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. This should not be allowed, particularly in Critical Habitat or in the Eddy Gulch Late Successional Reserve. I am also 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 experiencing a major biodiversity and climate emergency, and we must protect this last remaining wildlife refuges 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.

Your mission is to protect our fragile forests, not to cater to the short-sighted greed of the logging industries. You are in the unenviable position of gatekeeping the planned destruction of America's living heart, the forests. Please take some thought of the irreversible consequences of your decisions. This is not about cash flow, this is about the survival of a country.

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