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Comments: Comments on the Cedar-Gales Roadside Risk Reduction proposal

Submitted by:

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I have lived in the Oakridge area for the past 44 years and have enjoyed the scenic and scientific wonders of the Middle Fork landscape the whole time. Not only for recreation and special forest product collecting, but also for professional reasons. As a retired Forester who spent a bulk of my professional career on the Middle Fork, I have gained a great deal of knowledge of this ecosystem and still have an abiding interest in the changes I have seen and hope to continue to monitor over the years, both from the results of forest management projects I have helped to implement and in observing how the ecosystem responds to disturbances such as the Cedar Creek fire of 2022. So, I have an abiding interest in maintaining access to many areas of this landscape.

I am in full support of implementing activities to make use of these roads safe. I do not support proactive or reactive road closures of any kind, should risk reduction activities not be practical or acceptable. People have to realize that driving in any forest, green or dead, always entails some amount of risk. It seems of late that road closures within fire areas have been the Forest's default position, maybe out of pique at frustrated attempts to salvage fire-killed forests (which I support, if land allocations dictate), but this recent position is entirely without precedence. The Talyor Burn road was never closed after the 1993 Charleton Fire, and there's not more dangerous place to be during a high wind. Let the roads close themselves if events dictate, or let them be cleared as trees fall by firewood cutters and hunters, but please to not close them as a knee-jerk reaction to the remote possibility of someone getting squashed by a falling tree years in the future.

The following lists roads that I consider absolutely necessary to my continued use and enjoyment of the Middle Fork District, including a brief description of why.

Road 2422: this road accesses the shortest trail into Waldo Lake from the west and a very interesting chunk of the High Cascade plateau, as well as Spirit Lake and several past management projects I still have an interest in.

Road 2421: accesses Black Creek, portions of the 1991 Warner Creek Fire, and the trail accessing Lilian Falls, which I have visited a number of times, not to mention another western access to Waldo Lake. There are (were?) a number of big old trees in the valley bottom, and I am intensely interested in how they fared.

Road 5883 and its 378 spur: Of course, the access to Fuji Mountain, a must see place for visitors and the best overview of a goodly portion of the District, not to mention Waldo Lake. The 378 spur also accesses Big Bunchgrass Meadow, a favorite place of mine as well as providing an access point to the Eugene to Crest Trail.

Road 2408: This road also accesses the E to C trail, and Little Bunchgrass Meadow. The trail also provides the easiest access to see a goodly portion of the 1991 Warner Creek fire.

Road 5871: Provides the only road connection between the Salt and Salmon Creek watersheds, and also accesses a number of special habitats and past management projects I have a continuing interest in.

Road 1934 and it's 730 Spur: Not only does this road access Blair Lake (I wonder what has happened to that little gem) but also provides one of the two road connections between the Salmon Creek and North Fork watersheds. The 730 spur accesses Spring Prairie, a great viewpoint to see most of the old Oakridge Ranger District. On a clear day you can see everything from Mt. Jefferson to Diamond Peak. It is also a great place to watch a summer sunset, and to see a distant Oakridge, of that floats your boat.

Road 1944: This short road is the closest one can drive to the Cayuse Creek Old-Growth Grove. I already know what has happened to this magnificent stand of trees (it had a western redcedar in excess of 109" in diameter) and I am intensely interested in seeing the full extent of the damage and how that area will re-grow. This road also accesses Devil's Lake, a place few visit, and it is very hard to get there without this road. It also provides access to a very interesting Douglas-fir/Pacific silver fir stand just above the road's end.

Road 1931 and the 720 spur: The 720 spur of course accesses Huckleberry Lookout, so I'm sure you'll want to maintain safe access to that. The main 1931 road also accesses some very interesting special habitats, in particular two cold water spring-fed wetlands that I have visited often over the years. One, below 1931 a short distance is quite unique, containing an unusually low elevation sundew habitat.