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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Walla Walla Ranger District

Attn. Joseph Sciarrino

Tiger-Mill Project

I read the storyboard and attended the public meeting. I've also talked to the project lead and several other people who've been involved in designing this project. The project design seems sound. It seems focused on activities which, to the degree that they can be implemented, would provide improved fire resilience in the project area.

I'm particularly interested in the tethered logging system which hasn't been used locally before. These ground-based logging systems require a bed of slash to operate on for soil protection. I've seen ground-based feller-buncher operations that occurred when slash beds were not deep enough and there was little or no soil protection, lots of compaction and displacement. This was a recipe for soil erosion and damage to water quality. On the steep slopes that this system is prescribed for, without the proper protection, significant soil disturbance could occur, with negative effects to soil productivity and potentially to water quality.

I would like to see a prescription for a required minimum depth of slash bed for this logging system. I also would like to see a commitment to soil monitoring in the units using this logging system. Two goals of this monitoring should be 1) implementation of the mitigation and best management practices that are prescribed for soil protection and also 2) the effectiveness of these practices in protecting the soil resource and meeting project soils goals.

I understand that there is some possibility of this project being part of an Oregon State University study of tethered logging systems. I think that's exciting but I do not think it should take the place of local soil monitoring. Since adaptive management plays a big role in this project design, having timely, actual on the ground monitoring results from implementing a new logging system on steep slopes seems mandatory.

I would also like to know if the slash bed stays in place as equipment moves up and down the slope.

Protection of water quality in the municipal watershed will depend on protecting soil resources during ground-based logging and during prescribed burns, especially burns in the forested draws.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Stacia Peterson