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Dear good people,

I am writing to comment on the Rattail project scoping.

In scoping, as you identify the issues planners should consider, please look at long term effects of planned actions on fire resilience. Will the work not only address perceived immediate risk, but also promote a transition to greater fire resilience long term, in decades to follow?

Please focus effort on protecting communities and critical infrastructure, where it will do the most good. The Ruth Ranger District has done so much fire prevention work in the forest in recent years, yet it seemed to make little difference in 2020.

Please observe the laws that protect water quality, soils, wildlife, etc. There are many more fires to come in our changing world, and many more plans ahead. Let's not throw out decades of environmental wisdom in haste.

I have been spending time in burned forests for some years now and am struck by how well they heal themselves. The spring after a fire, if not sooner, sprouts and suckers emerge from hardwood trees and shrubs. Grasses and forbs grow lushly. The following few years are even greener, as plants gain vigor and fresh seed is set.

This resilience is lost in the wake of logging. Churned exposed soil remains largely bare, allowing erosion and the establishment of weedy growth including invasives. This can readily be seen in timber harvests already done in the wake of the August fire on 27N16, 27N34, and Surprise Gulch, where surrounding sites are clearly recovering well, and the logged spots profoundly disturbed.

I hope that this sale won't result in large trees and snags being felled, then left to rot in the woods, as was evident at a couple of the above mentioned sales.

Adding new mileage to the road system in the Ruth Ranger District seems unwise, given that the difficulty of keeping up with maintenance on existing roads.

I am struck by the difference between how the upper Middle Fork Eel in the Yolla Bolly Wilderness and the

headwaters of the Mad burned during the August fire, as seen from Jones Ridge. The Yolla Bolly side is recovering very well with no human intervention; as far as I know it had little or no firefighting. Once the fire dropped into the Mad, where extensive salvage logging occurred decades ago, as well as more recent logging, it blew up, sweeping through dense younger Douglas fir forest, decimating the sweet settlement of Three Forks and raging down to do great damage in Ruth, with the loss of huge swaths of forest along the way. Large sections of Douglas fir were completely killed, and unlike so many species of plants that went through the fire, they aren't coming back on their own any time soon.

Admittedly, the vegetation is different, and weather was a very significant driver. But one takeaway is that Douglas fir has expanded beyond a sustainable range in the southern Six Rivers. Tens of thousands of acres of Douglas fir forest south of Ruth lost nearly all their trees in the August fire. With climate change, vegetation zones can be expected to shift uphill. What had been lower elevation Douglas fir forest may not be suitable in the future due to warmer temperatures, water stress, and fire risk.

Accepting and perhaps facilitating conversion to oak woodland, like on the south slope of Jones Ridge, can reduce fire risk, increase community safety, and support a more fire-resilient vegetation, which can recover from future fires without human intervention. Conversely, replanting Douglas fir may prove a wasted effort at lower elevation sites, as the trees are less likely to survive than the historical pattern may suggest-and may actually increase fire risk, rather than reducing it as the plan is intended to do.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate. Again, please respect existing environmental laws and standards: we are in this for the long haul. The upward trend in acres burned can be expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Treating every fire cleanup as an emergency, exempt from normal standards, will only add to cumulative damage.

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