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First name: Aubrey

Last name: Stargell

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest continues to suffer from lack of active management/neglect. Timely and appropriate silvicultural treatments are not being done. Second and third growth stands are stagnating and overstocked. This inaction results in greater susceptibility to pests/diseases and greatly increases wildfire risk over time by accumulating fuel buildup. Stagnating forests also constitute missed opportunities in sequestering more carbon by greatly slowing forest growth (sequestration).

Local economies are also being short-changed by the loss of commerce and jobs associated with a vibrant timber component to the local economy. Sawmills in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties are forced to source logs from much further away, thereby increasing transportation carbon footprints. Much more carbon could be sequestered and/or not expended in the first place by sourcing locally while encouraging fast growing forests. We should source locally what we consume locally.

The Northwest Forest Plan greatly diminished timber harvest on the MBSNF. However, even the meager harvests allowed in the plan on Matrix lands have not even come close to being achieved largely due to lack of political will. This damages the forests, local taxing jurisdictions and school districts, local economies, and misses sequestration opportunities. This is a lose, lose, lose scenario. We can and should do much better.

In summary, I strongly suggest that the Northwest Forest Plan be amended to allow much greater management action to be taken on the MBSNF. These actions should include thinning, even-aged management, fuels reduction, road maintenance, and wildlife enhancement. This can be done while still maintaining very high water quality, improving wildlife habitat, sequestering more carbon, reducing wildfire hazard, and stimulating local economies. Modern forestry practices are the truly sustainable and renewable tools we can employ to accomplish all of these goals for the benefit of every citizen and the environment. Doing nothing will not yield positive results. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Aubrey Stargell