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First name: Paul
Last name: Paniagua
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I Support Access and Active Management in the Northwest Forest Plan

Dear Northwest Forest Plan,

I enjoy accessing and recreation on public lands and believe continued access is important for all. I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback for the Northwest Forest Plan.

I am concerned with the management of the northwest forest. Access to the public through roads and motorized use is crucial for various reasons. I believe motorized routes should not be closed arbitrarily through restrictive designations and management decisions and the USFS should maximize the amount of routes available.

The economic benefit for local communities is a factor the USFS needs to consider. Recreation is a trillion dollar a year industry. Motorized use on public lands has grown tremendously in popularity over the past few years and the USFS should be looking for ways to help the local communities capitalize on these opportunities. Closing routes through forest designations will be irresponsible management as it will concentrate the growing number of users into smaller areas. Motorized routes not only accommodate motorized users but emergency response teams as well. These forests contribute to local economies through timber harvest, recreation, grazing, rock hounding and other contributions. All of these require public access throughout these forests.

In order to advance equity of access on public land for those with mobility impairment disabilities, it is important to recognize that discrimination towards American with disabilities within federal land management agencies is deeply rooted and hidden in plain sight. Recreation, primarily motorized recreation has taken a backseat to conservation and protection. Motorized recreation is often times the only way those with mobility impairment disabilities are able to access public lands. Current policies actively discriminate against this group of underserved Americans and I would like to see this travel plan help connect all users with public lands. Allowing e-bikes on non-motorized routes is one way to address this as they have the same impact as a human powered bike.

In order to prevent and avoid adverse resource impacts and user conflict, the USFS should be actively managing the area and routes. Through different management strategies and proper education, negative impacts can be properly mitigated without closures. As popularity for outdoor recreation grows, the USFS should be looking at ways to provide reasonable access that will sustain the growing numbers of visitation. Restricting use and concentrating use will only increase impact.

I support dispersed camping on public land, and a robust network of designated routes is the best way to ensure abundant dispersed camping access. I believe dispersed camping should be allowed within the appropriate disturbance area alongside each route. Often pullouts and spur routes lead to high-value dispersed camping locations, and they should be recognized for this purpose and need.

The First Amendment protects the right of groups to gather and have organized rides where we educate each other on ways to best enjoy our preferred choice of recreation. Limiting routes could be violating those rights. I don't want to see the USFS give preferential treatment to any user group over another. I believe the USFS can manage for all types of recreation within this area. Motorized and non-motorized users can co-exist and one should not be restricted to accommodate another.

Wildfire is the greatest threat to the Northwest Forest. Catastrophic fires have decimated communities, habitat

and forests due to lack of better forest management. In order to protect these national forests, and the people who live near them, work in them and recreate in them, the land should be managed to reduce wildfire. Roads act as a natural fire barrier and should be protected through this plan.

Sincerely,
Paul Paniagua
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