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First name: Keith

Last name: Watson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I Support Access and Active Management in the Northwest Forest Plan

Dear Northwest Forest Plan,

This is a form letter, but everything it mentions is important to me. I have been recreating in many of these areas for years. Access and recreation go hand in hand with land management. Access brings a need to maintain. Without maintenance, crime and fire danger become prevalent. I have been volunteer on many occasions through various user groups in order to maintain the areas we use - not to mention the funds out of our own pockets that we bring to the table to fight for and maintain these areas. I don't think the general public understands what it takes to maintain a forest and there is a misconception that shutting access is the answer. It's not. Proper management benefits even the non user.

The letter:

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,

Keith Watson

12709 NE 39th St Vancouver, WA 98682-6884

notajpthng@yahoo.com