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Comments: To: Shaniko Cowie

Our farm in Halfway is the lower portion of an historic property that climbs up the West Wall in Halfway, OR. For more than 30 years, we have actively farmed the fields for which we have water rights. Our home, barn, tractor and hay sheds are at the lower, eastern part of the property. About half of our property is timber to the east which was selectively logged before we arrived.

I have read and have a few thoughts about the DFPZ proposal, #65581.

I can recall two very large fires in our area. Once in the 1990s, the required firefighters outnumbered the population of the area's towns and ranches! I believe Pine Valley residents are now increasingly aware of the challenge of living within a Wildland Urban Interface. Many are implementing firewise measures to protect their property and adjusting their own woodland activities

If existing roads on the West Wall are maintained, are more roads necessary which could, in turn, cause an unintended negative consequence? A considerable amount of wildlife - deer, elk, bears, cougars and recently wolves - move easily from that western area through our land at the current time. Surely additional roads cannot help but disrupt that transit making new roads debatable. Does the proposed road expansion meet the USFS's own guidelines/limitations on such intrusions and fuels treatment and actually benefit firefighting efforts and wildlife preservation?

With regard to thinning or logging, this must be done with great care to leave those species that are best adapted to changing climate. My own recent experience attempting to grow new trees on our land has been very disappointing. For example, even with careful attention to water and location, fir is just not going to work well with our changing climate. Leaving the trees on the West Wall most likely to survive based on applied forest research makes a lot of sense. Reforestation should be similarly informed.

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It is appreciated that Wallowa Whitman NF is following the USFS Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Strategy that emphasizes local input, expertise and needs throughout its pages. It is equally important that Categorical Exclusions not interfere with this process.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of residents' concerns. I know well how difficult it is to gain approval for such a large project mixing science, government regulations, varied ownership and emotions.

Denis Norlander