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Comments: I read the plan for the Telephone Gap Project closely, as it is near where I live, and because I have spent my life living near and working in forests. This plan is to me a welcome step on the return to a responsible relationship between human beings and the land. It is flexible and allows for adaptation as we learn what is effective, and at the same time it accomplishes what many of the people lobbying against the plan say they want: a healthy forest that helps sequester carbon.

Opponents to the proposed forest management actions for the Telephone Gap Project seem not to have actually read the document. Most of the comments seem well meant, but appear to be based on erroneous information and, at times, downright falsehoods. I grew up in the western US in areas dominated by forests and have seen (and experienced) the consequences of mismanagement, and the damage done by this kind of thinking.

Those who decry the plans for managing Telephone Gap seem to see the area only in terms of what they consider as a forest's primary use: as carbon sinks to help mitigate the carbon load the settler economy has imposed on the world. To that end, they lobby to maintain the forest in "old growth" status. This is just an extension of the original settler idea of the land being in service to them alone. This is wrong. And the assumptions they make about "old growth" are misguided.

Forests on the North American continent have been managed by human beings for thousands of years. The techniques used varied from place to place based on a keen appreciation of the natural processes at work in each place, and depending on knowledge of how to achieve long-term forest health. When European settlers arrived, those traditional ways of living with the land were disrupted and began to be lost. The settlers saw land as something to be used and profited from. As a result the landscape changed dramatically.

Something my father often talked about was his concern that "if they don't thin those trees and get rid of all the fuel up there, one of these years there's going to be one hell of a big fire." and one year there was: the valley we lived in was isolated for weeks because all roads were closed as entire ridges burned. This was in southern Oregon in the mid-20th century. It was the beginning of my awareness of how misguided forest management of the time was. While the forests and the conditions there were different from New England's, the underlying premise was the same: We need to honor the natural processes of forests to keep them healthy.

As a trained environmentalist (soil scientist, hydrogeologist, water basin management) with years of experience working with agencies and the public, I support the plan for management of the forest lands in the Telegraph Gap area for reducing disease, enhancing varied habitat for both plants and animals, and assisted migration of forest species.

I confess I did not pay much attention to the snowmobile and recreation part of the plan. To me, snowmobiles are a form of transportation, and I don't "get" the desire to use a noisy machine in a natural area. But I also understand that some people don't really experience the forest as a living ecosystem, but a place to play. Just please keep them away from walking trails.