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Comments: As currently drafted, the Lickstone project includes important controlled burns, watershed improvements, and a new parking lot to accommodate recreation. Unfortunately, it also threatens the area's rich cove forests, ecological integrity, water quality, and wildlife habitat. We need a balanced approach that protects our natural forests while supporting sustainable recreation and controlled burns to prevent dangerous wildfires.

While the Lickstone Project aims to provide wood for the local economy through extensive commercial logging, it poses significant threats to our natural forests, water quality, and wildlife. Many cold mountain streams, including the Middle Prong, the Right Hand Prong, Queen Creek, Big Creek, McClure Creek, and Nicks Creek, flow from Lickstone Ridge. Storm runoff from poorly designed or maintained logging roads increases sediment pollution and harms aquatic species such as Eastern Hellbenders, trout, and other important species. Road construction can also help spread non-native invasive plant species, which destroy the native habitats that sustain our native wildlife species.

I support the controlled burns in the proposal to maintain high-elevation pitch pine and oak forests and their associated wildlife.

I also support the aquatic organism passage projects in the proposal to reconnect miles of stream for aquatic wildlife.

In addition, I support the construction of a new parking lot to facilitate recreational use and access.

Furthermore, measures should be taken to prevent the spread of non-native invasive plant species due to logging and road building.

Additionally, Skyline logging should be done on steep slopes, and road construction on steep slopes should be avoided to mitigate landslides and erosion risks.

Also, logging fewer trees through the Rich Cove Forest Ecozone would be best. The Lickstone Project exceeds the natural range of variation in Rich Cove Forests, which could lead to a loss of ecological integrity.

And finally, removing units 50 and 52 from the timber plan would be better. These units are diverse and in good condition; logging them would degrade these healthy Rich Cove Forests.

In conclusion, please do the right thing and enact a balanced approach that protects our forests, watersheds, and wildlife while supporting sustainable recreation and controlled burns to prevent dangerous wildfires.