

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/2/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Ruth

Last name: Morlas

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments on the proposed amendment for management of old growth forests. I am not a professional in the field of conservation, ecology, biology, or any related field. I am simply a citizen of the United States with a high degree of concern and interest in how our public lands and national forests are being managed.

Even to my untrained eye, it is evident that the hand from the timber industry has had a say in the all proposed Alternatives except for Alternative 3. I do not understand why the draft EIS is even commenting on which Alternative is the "preferred" alternative. Should not an EIS be an objective statement of the impacts of each alternative. Why try to persuade the reader to choose a specific Alternative, such as Alternative 2? The EIS does not seem to take into account any impacts that would threaten biodiversity from timber harvesting. If it did take that into account, Alternative 3 would be the preferred one.

From the study by Davis, et. al. 2024, it is clear that a prescribed burn has the most benefit to a forest due to several factors, such as providing habitat for species who benefit greatly from the aftermath of a burn (beetles, woodpeckers, returning within days to burned trees left in place, etc.), no mechanical impact from harvesting trees before the prescribed burn (it is well known the huge negative impacts caused by mechanical transport to/from forests that would be required if Alternative 2 is chosen, especially negative impacts to wildlife, and especially from road building needed for mechanical extraction of trees by the timber industry), clearing out dead organic material which allows the forest to jumpstart new growth (every area I've seen after a timber harvest is left full of dead organic material that is not natural and is not used by wildlife the way it would be if it's from a natural fire (or simulated by a prescribed fire), and nutrient release into the soil, among other benefits. All these benefits can be provided by prescribed burns alone, without the need for timber harvesting.

Allowing timber harvesting of our old growth forests is absolutely the wrong way to manage these majestic natural areas that belong to all of us, not just the timber industry. Please don't leave loopholes open for timber harvesting in old growth forests. Allowing timber harvesting and other extractive activities on our lands for more than a century is what got us to this point in the climate crisis. Allowing a little here and a little there will surely mean death by a thousand paper cuts to our remaining ecosystems that we so badly need in light of, not just climate change, but biodiversity loss. This is the decade where we need to stand up to protect what's left, and restore what has been taken away, not to continue on a path of extraction and consumption.