

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/19/2024 2:10:58 AM

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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the proposed Morgan Nesbitt Forest Resiliency Project Draft EA and FONSI, November 7, 2024.

I comment as a resident of Baker County, Oregon, acknowledged as ancestral Nimiipuu lands, and also for those who cannot speak for themselves, the fungi, flora, and fauna of the forest.

I enjoy countless hours and days in the Wallowa Whitman National Forest and the Hells Canyon Recreation Area through all seasons of the year, often performing trail maintenance and water quality monitoring as a volunteer for local non-profit organizations.

In these times of budgetary cutbacks, I ask forest managers to do less with less; to eschew commercial timber harvest with its well documented ecological destruction, net higher carbon emissions, and higher associated costs in staff and budget resources, in favor of less costly and impactful, yet highly effective, practices, e.g. non commercial thinning and prescribed burns.

As a conservationist and a taxpayer, I find it irresponsible for managers to proceed with the proposed extent of commercial timber harvest without adequate staff to perform the detailed planning, analyses, and monitoring required to reduce the harms caused by these practices.

I have followed the Morgan Nesbitt Project since its initial scoping phase and am pleased to see that forest managers have begun to recognize the need to downsize project actions and limit their destructive impacts, e.g. compliance with the 21" Eastside Screens rule, inclusion of a 25,000 acre wildlife corridor, retiring nearly 18 miles of roads, and reducing commercial harvest acreage by 20%.

Yet, still less needs to be done:

Commercial harvest and non-commercial thinning need to exclude places that had not been previously logged, are located within designated roadless areas, or require temporary road building for access.

Additionally, I ask forest managers to recognize the value of forest preserves, as inventoried by Law, Mildrexler, et al., to actively address climate change, not just respond to changing forest conditions, and allowing the existing forest to continue serving as a carbon sink and as refugia for biodiversity.

The value of these stands should not be limited by their size or areal extent, but considered as ecologically valuable tracts in greater land cover complexes.