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Comments: Good morning Forest Service staff and Merry Christmas. As a lifetime Eastern Oregonian with six generations of family history in the Blue Mountains (and another generation coming in--my kids), I'm writing concerning the Morgan Nesbitt project. I submitted preliminary comments on the project as well.

The weather these last few days this December--with temps in the high 40s, rainbows, a springy scent in the air, and the quick thawing of snow not only in the Wallowa Valley, where I live, but also pretty high up into the mountains--has me particularly aware as I write today of the impacts of climate change. As the Wallowa Whitman National Forest continues to plan projects, especially large projects like Morgan Nesbitt, I'm looking for meaningful preparation for the unpredictable future we're moving into. With this in mind, I want to highlight a couple of things I appreciate about the project as currently proposed, and a few areas of concern.

First, I'm pleased to see that wildlife corridor mapping has been incorporated into this project. We know that the Morgan Nesbitt project area serves many species as an important linkage area between the Blue Mountains and the Rockies. As climate change accelerates, more and more species at all spacial scales will require intact habitat corridors so they can track their favorable climate conditions. Low-gradient fish-bearing riparian areas are especially helpful in this regard, and with this in mind, I'm glad to see some road redesign and decommissioning proposed in the interest of mitigating impacts to streams. I'd love to see explicitly supportive management encouraging beavers and the kinds of riparian systems that they build and maintain; I know there are beavers in the project area and I've seen firsthand their enrichment of these very important wildlife corridors. Beavers and their works also make for a "spongier" landscape that can hold more water for longer in the season, and slow flood pulses, and these attributes are helpful for everybody--humans too.

The Hells Canyon NRA and the Wallowa Whitman contain an abundance of steep, difficult terrain that is climate resilient because it is heterogeneous--and also difficult to access. There's plenty of good science to show that the most climate-resilient habitats are the most intact. With this in mind, I'd prefer to see no new road building in the project area, and no logging of forest stands that have never been logged before (especially in the HCNRA, which really ought to be managed under its own comprehensive management plan). Places that are currently quiet, unroaded refuges for wildlife throughout the project area should be left alone, even if they appear dense or messy to us. Having explored much of the project area on foot, I'm very aware that there are areas of the forest that are likely to respond well to thinning (and to prescribed burning!)--but there is also abundant value for many species in denser forest patches and in the naturally closed-canopy moist mixed conifer areas of the forest. Building roads, even temporary roads, into such places might net some board feet, but the disruption to these less-impacted habitat patches and the species that depend upon them would be significant. Please protect intact habitat patches and prioritize complexity--some mess is a good mess--and let's please stick to our existing human footprint (or even tread a little lighter).

I'm also glad to see the project commit to retaining the oldest, most fire-resilient trees on the landscape, those over 21," and very glad to see prescribed fire incorporated into the plan across such significant acreage. I hope this gets done, and hope to see local Tribes involved in the planning and execution of the burns. I was surprised to see no mention of Tribal First Foods co-management in the EA, considering the abundance of many cultural foods in this area, many of which respond well to fire.

This is a very large project in a spectacular corner of our landscape that is very special to many people for many reasons. My family and I, who often spend time in the Morgan Nesbitt project area, won't be the only one watching closely as this project is implemented. Thanks for all the work that has gone into the planning so far, and thank you for considering these comments, and the others you receive, with care and attention to the future

my kids will inherit.

Be well,

Christina deVillier, Lostine, OR