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First name: Mia

Last name: Pisano

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to submit public comment on the Stone Creek Vegetation Management Project. I am a recreational user of the project area. I depend on the forest of the project area for air quality. I depend on the forest of the project area for carbon sequestration and carbon storage, for climate stabilization, the most urgent need of humanity worldwide.

I have spent a lot of time in the project area and the surrounding area. I have studied the planning materials and supporting documentation.

I recognize and affirm that the area under consideration, now referred to as Mt. Hood National Forest, is the rightful homeland of the indigenous people who have always lived with this land, and that the process of forcible displacement of native people, and the displacement of native authority by the US federal government, has not been rectified.

Within that context, I respectfully submit these comments for your consideration. I have support for many aspects of the proposed action. I request further information on several aspects of the proposed action. I have concerns regarding several aspects of the proposed action. There are issues not addressed in the Scoping letter that I encourage the agency to develop and include for consideration.

Areas of Support:

*I strongly support the decision to conduct a complete Environmental Assessment, rather than to use CE authority to fast-track elements of this project. I appreciate the Forest Service prioritizing a more thorough and comprehensive planning process, with more opportunity for public engagement.

*I strongly support the inclusion of current relevant research, including the 2022 Climate Change vulnerability assessment, and Dr. Merschel's pyroecology research.

*I strongly support the Forest Service engaging in meaningful collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and incorporating elements of traditional indigenous ecological knowledge and practice.

*I strongly support that this proposal utilizes multiple layers of strategies to restore fire into the forest in healthy ways, including:

othe treatment of large-diameter trees' wells during snowpack,

othe inclusion of both pile burning and broadcast burning

oplanning for multiple entries with prescribed fire

othe inclusion of broadcast burning within hazardous fuels treatments alongside primary roads

*I strongly support the proposed changes to the road system, including 2 miles of decommissioning and 20 miles of stormproofing and changing ML2 to ML1.

Request further information:

I request that in the Draft EA, the following areas are developed in more detail:

*Include a map showing possible alignments of proposed temporary roads.

*Discuss in detail the steps that will be taken to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle access to temporary roads and landings after treatment and before rehabilitation.

*What guidelines will be used for retention of larger trees in commercial harvest units? (E.g. diameter, age) Will these be marked by agency staff or by contractor?

*What guidelines will be used in commercial and non-commercial units to protect and retain large-diameter snags and large-diameter down woody debris?

Concerns:

*In the Stone Creek planning area and other areas in the Clackamas Ranger District, heavy recreational use has had significant negative impacts on the landscape, including unauthorized motor vehicle use that leads to erosion into waterways, and accumulation of trash including human waste in dispersed camping areas. I am concerned that this Scoping Letter does not include any proposed actions to address these impacts and their negative effect on forest and watershed health, and on fire risk from motor vehicles and campfires.

*The Stone Creek area includes numerous and diverse wetlands; some are intact and thriving, others have been negatively impacted by conifer encroachment, extirpation of beavers, and past logging activities. I am concerned that this proposal does not include any actions to restore the functioning of wetlands and wet meadows and riparian areas. The presence of thriving wetlands is a major contributor to healthy forests and their ability to experience fire.

*I have concerns and questions about the Sanitation treatment proposed for 91 acres in units 1365 and 2000. This area is experiencing lodgepole mortality, however, there is also healthy and diverse understory development taking place, which would be negatively impacted by heavy machinery. Is this really a problem that needs fixing?

*In other projects in the Clackamas Ranger District, specifically post-fire hazard work in the Riverside Fire area, I have seen firsthand serious contractor mistakes that could have been prevented with regular on-site monitoring by agency staff. I am concerned that without regular on-site monitoring by agency staff, these will continue. I understand that the Forest Service is in a period of significant budget constraints; nevertheless, these types of damaging actions by reckless contractors must be prevented.

Encouragement for further development and consideration:

*I encourage the selection of local, experienced, knowledgeable contractors, ideally local indigenous partners.

*I encourage the development of robust guidelines to protect valuable biological legacies within treatment units, including large-diameter/mature trees, and large-diameter snags and down woody debris.

*I encourage the development of robust guidelines to protect wetlands, meadows, riparian areas, and other sensitive landscape features where they are adjacent to areas where any type of mechanical treatment will take place.

*I encourage continued collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and the inclusion of cultural stewardship practices, including cultural burning.

*I encourage the inclusion of actions to address the impacts of dispersed camping areas in seasonal streams, including the 5740 Road at Stone Creek, where currently motor vehicles are regularly driven through the streambed, and other sites throughout the planning area.

*I encourage the development of steps to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle access to temporary roads and landings after treatment and before rehabilitation.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.