Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/3/2025 9:22:20 PM
First name: Theodora
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To: USFS
Re: Stone Creek Vegetation Management Project #65780
January 2, 2025

Greetings:
I am Dr. Theodora Tsongas, an environmental health scientist residing in Oregon. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Stone Creek Vegetation Management Project.
These are the elements of the project that are of concern to me:
1. The use of heavy machinery in order to save money is very troubling and is more damaging so does not save money: in short, it is not worth it. Furthermore, hand crews can do the work in a more economical and specifically appropriate way by not making a mess of the landscape that just has to be remediated, costing more money. Using heavy machinery for proper ecosystem management is unwise. Please use hand crews to make changes more effectively.
2. Cutting small trees with less than a ten inch diameter is concerning for 2 reasons: the new cohort of trees will be delayed; and, there is a need for ladder trees in a healthy forest.
3. Unit 1441 is adjacent to a popular campground and recreation sites. How will traffic hazards to people be mitigated during this work?
4. Pile burning is less hazardous than broadcast burning; debris should be piled and burned and burned as soon as possible to reduce the risk of insect outbreaks and reduce fuel for wildfires.
5. I am happy to hear that controlled burning is being proposed for ecosystem and wildfire management in these forests that have been lacking that essential part of their ecosystem for many years: wildfire. But I am concerned that choice of contractors will be based on criteria other than knowledge and experience in our local forests and with controlled burns. Who are the contractors doing any proposed controlled burn? Who will design the burn treatments? It is absolutely necessary that this be done by experienced, well vetted and local contractors. This is a perfect time to involve indigenous people with experience and familiarity with the local/regional forests, such as members of the Warm Springs Tribe. In fact, collaboration with the Warm Springs Tribe could include cultural burns, serving multiple needs, the needs of people as part of the ecosystem.
6. With increased prevalence of dispersed camping, would it be possible to limit vehicle size to mitigate some of the adverse impacts?
7. What can be done to keep water up high in the watershed where there are wetlands? Keeping machinery out would help to keep the moisture in, as well as conserving and restoring the diversity of these wetland habitats.
8. Thank you for taking extra steps to protect larger trees in winter during snowpack. And thank you for sponsoring interdisciplinary teams to work on vegetation management, as it takes a variety of expertise to collaborate to do this work properly, and it will get a more effective and restorative vegetation management system in place, that will hopefully be adopted in other places, other forests.

Thank you for your attention and your time.