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First name: Mia

Last name: Pisano

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Michelle Lombardo,

I am writing to submit comment on the Consent for Geothermal Leasing #67700.

I rely on the forest of Mt. Hood for my drinking water. I rely on the forests for clean air, and a climate that can support the continued survival of all beings within the web of life. I frequently work as a volunteer to field-survey proposed actions within Mt. Hood National Forest, and have in-depth on-the-ground firsthand knowledge of the forests and the Forest Service actions. I have been a member for five years of two Forest Collaboratives. In these Forest Collaboratives, I have developed deep and meaningful relationships with individuals with a wide range of perspectives and opinions, and have learned that we agree more than we disagree. I have developed great respect for the knowledge, expertise, and dedication of the federal employees who serve in the Forest Service, even when we disagree. Furthermore, I affirm that the government of the United States is obligated by law to meet trust responsibilities to include Tribal governments as full partners in management of US Forest Service lands.

I have a number of concerns about this project.

The specialist reports contained within the project documents enumerate many foreseeable negative impacts to the botany, wildlife, soils, silviculture, riparian areas and aquatic species, roads and transportation, and scenic viewsheds. Some specific issues include:

One-quarter of the proposed area is designated as Late-Successional Reserve (LSR). These areas are designated to be managed to "protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems."

Exploration and development of these parcels, even with stipulations, would invariably have negative impacts on late-successional ecosystems and species.

The project areas contain a large percentage of designated northern spotted owl critical habitat, comprising 95% of parcel OROR-70802, and 41% of parcel OROR-70803.

One stipulation states: "There should be no surface occupancy in designated or proposed critical habitat for species listed under the Endangered Species Act"

Why is the Forest Service offering consent on parcel 70802 if 95% of the parcel contains listed critical habitat? I am concerned that the surface occupancy stipulation will be inadequate to provide meaningful protection of the critical habitat in these areas.

There is high potential to spread invasive plant species through increased vehicle traffic and ground disturbance.

Much of the surrounding area (including portions of the parcels) burned in the 2020 Lionshead Fire. Exploration and development on these parcels could negatively impact these sensitive post-fire ecosystems.

Additionally, I have concerns about potential cumulative impacts outside the project area. Large-scale geothermal energy development could potentially disrupt the small-scale geothermal energy that makes possible the existence of Breitenbush Hot Springs, a beloved local business that contributes significantly to the area's economy.

For these numerous reasons, I urge you to deny the BLM's proposal Consent for Geothermal Leasing #67700.

Sincerely,
Mia Pisano