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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Project Manager,

I am writing to submit comment on the Stone Creek Vegetation Management Project.

Firstly, I am excited to hear that the Forest Service will be implementing fire for understory management- this is a very positive step in the right direction, as fire has always been an important part of how our forests function. It's especially beneficial that the FS will be collaborating with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, as they will be able to provide essential guidance on the use of fire, and other aspects of the project. I urge the FS to take advantage of this opportunity to work closely with the Tribes, and follow their recommendations.

However, there are also some ways in which the project could be improved. My first concern is protection of mature trees, large downed logs, and snags. In second-growth forests like this one, these are essential sources of biodiversity, and it's important that these are retained, allowing the forest to diversify. In particular, the use of masticators for roadside fuels treatment in older tree stands is concerning- is there another way to do this that poses less risk to older trees?

Second, this project should include plans to restore and protect wetlands and meadows in the area. As our region faces increasing heatwaves and droughts, restoring wetlands will both maintain habitat as well as keep streams running to lower elevations.

Lastly, please include a plan to clean up the dispersed camp sites in the area. It's unfortunate that many of these sites have been filled with trash by irresponsible campers, but if the FS could put its resources towards cleaning these up, that would make a difference for both the forest and people who recreate here.

Thank you for taking action to manage these lands responsibly.

Best,

Nico Westarp