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First name: Paul
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear District Ranger,

Please accept this comment letter regarding the Mottet Vegetation Management Project (Project #67275). I request that this comment be entered into the administrative record.

I am writing as a local resident who cares deeply about the health of our forests, the safety of our communities, and the future of places like Jubilee Lake. The Mottet project area includes this beloved destination, where families camp, fish, hike, and connect with nature. It is one of the most cherished recreational areas in the Umatilla National Forest. To advance a massive logging program here under the banner of an "emergency" is deeply concerning and fundamentally misguided.

The Forest Service is proposing nearly 19,000 acres of commercial logging within a 48,000-acre project area. This sheer scale alone makes clear that what is being proposed is not an emergency response but an industrial timber program. True emergencies are narrow and targeted [mdash] removing hazard trees from a road, for example, or addressing sudden blowdown in a campground. They are not sprawling, multi-year logging operations. Declaring an "emergency" over long-term insect activity and then using it to justify years of clearcutting around Jubilee Lake and surrounding drainages stretches the intent of the law far beyond recognition.

Insects and disease are not sudden crises; they are part of the natural life cycle of forests. Bark beetles, root disease, and similar processes ebb and flow with climate and weather conditions. They provide habitat, recycle nutrients, and shape forest structure. Scientists have been clear that climate stress [mdash] warming temperatures, drought, and shifting precipitation [mdash] is the main driver of outbreaks, not simply "too many trees" (Keyser et al. 2018; Law et al. 2018). Commercial logging will not fix these problems. In fact, cutting and hauling timber in sensitive headwaters often leaves the remaining forest more stressed, spreads pathogens, and compromises resilience (Fitzgerald & Bennett 2013).

Jubilee Lake is a prime example of what is at stake. Logging on the surrounding slopes risks damaging water quality, increasing sedimentation, and degrading the very qualities that make it such a special place for families and visitors. Heavy equipment and road use compact soils and funnel erosion into streams and lakes. Once the ecological character of a place like Jubilee Lake is altered, it cannot simply be put back.

Large and old trees in the project area are another irreplaceable asset. Science shows that they dominate forest carbon storage, stabilize soils, and help maintain cooler, moister microclimates (Mildrexler et al. 2020). These traits are exactly what forests need to withstand the hotter, drier conditions we are facing. Logging them now undermines both climate resilience and long-term stability. The better path is to protect these trees and let them continue to grow into the old-growth forests our children and grandchildren deserve to inherit.

I am also troubled by the precedent this project sets. If slow-moving, climate-driven processes like insect activity can be labeled as "emergencies," then virtually any part of the forest could be rushed into logging without meaningful public involvement. This is a dangerous shortcut around decades of hard-won environmental protections, including the requirement for proper NEPA analysis and alternatives consideration. The public deserves a transparent process, not a declaration of urgency designed to push timber sales forward.

As a resident and frequent visitor to Jubilee Lake, I urge the Forest Service to reconsider this approach. At minimum, the agency should withdraw the emergency designation, conduct a full environmental review, and

allow for robust public input. Projects of this magnitude must be guided by science, transparency, and a genuine commitment to ecological integrity. Anything less undermines trust and puts both our forests and our communities at risk.

Please do not sacrifice Jubilee Lake and the surrounding forests to a hasty and unjustified logging program. These lands are too valuable [mdash] for water, wildlife, climate, recreation, and community well-being [mdash] to be written off under the false cover of an "emergency."

Please confirm receipt of this comment and that it will be entered into the project record.

Respectfully,

Paul Hamilton-Pennell
Walla Walla resident