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Comments: The purported reason for the project is fire mitigation. But the reality is that the proponents of the project are exploiting our very real concerns about the impact of fires on our lives, homes, communities, and businesses to extract timber resources. Our communities here live with fire. It is and has been an aspect of living here for millennia. Fire severity and frequency is indeed increasing; but your own studies do not support the thesis that increasingly severe impacts of fire are due to the densification of national forests that surround our communities. Rather, they show it is due to ever increasing fire weather: heat, drought, wind. These conditions are making fire more dangerous for our communities, and logging projects do nothing to address this reality. There is no evidence that such projects reduce losses from wildfire. To the contrary. Dense, large forests sequester carbon; act as wind and fire breaks, which slows fire spread; create microclimates of increased humidity and decreased temperatures. Studies show that removing timber from forests and transporting logs to mills releases massive amounts of carbon - more than fire or other natural processes. Logging devastates the ecosystems that are fire-adapted and dependent for rejuvenation. "Fuels reduction" itself results in massive tree mortality-again more than fire or other natural processes, even considering the worsening of fire conditions due to climate change.

The resources spent on this project would be better used to fire harden our homes and towns than on logging projects in the wilderness. The science shows that human survivability is dependent on factors of how and where we live, not the condition of forests that are in many miles away from our towns and homes. Proven fire mitigation includes: fire-wise construction and landscaping practices; existing home hardening; selective pruning and small-scale thinning projects in and near homes and towns; and community emergency planning and rapid response; and maintenance of multiple evacuations corridors.

Finally, the impact of the project is ruinous for our recreation - based economy. The in-tact forests are the basis of our recreation economy - hunting, camping, hiking, biking, skiing, sight-seeing, wildlife observation, and birding. This is not a logging community. There are no mills here. Exporting this resource to far-away mills will not benefit us economically - it will not create jobs or wealth here. Logging equipment and trucks will clog our transportation infrastructure for years, disrupting access to the forests that remain, and interfering with our day-to-day commerce.

While we maintain high regard for the local foresters and community members who have been involved in planning of these projects, we understand fully that the impetus for Midnight and other Twisp and Methow watershed projects is not to help or protect us, but is to benefit the timber industry.