

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/15/2026 5:30:00 PM

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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Austin Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). As someone who regularly uses this area of the Malheur for snowmobiling, side-by-side riding, and trail maintenance for all recreationists, I am deeply invested in how access decisions are made and communicated. My concerns focus on the impacts of the proposed actions on public access, rural community use, and the transparency of the information provided in the DEIS.

The DEIS appears to rely heavily on designating access only to certain routes, often labeling roads as "stored," which in practice means they are closed to the public. This terminology is confusing and, from my perspective, misleading. If a road cannot be used, it is closed-calling it "stored" does not change that reality for the many people who rely on these routes for firewood, household needs, emergency response, and recreation. The project's stated Purpose and Need should be supported by clear, honest language and by analysis that shows why restricting access to such an extent is necessary, not just assumed.

I am also concerned about the broader impacts on rural communities and local residents who depend on these lands. The loss of access affects not only recreation but also daily life and public safety. The DEIS does not adequately analyze how these changes will impact emergency access or how future restrictions might be built upon the current proposal. There is also a lack of detail on what types of restrictions might be placed in "restoration areas," making it difficult for the public to understand what is actually being proposed from one place to another.

Additionally, the maps and definitions provided in the DEIS do not always match each other or align with statements made by Forest Service staff, such as assurances that no road closures are happening. This inconsistency makes it hard to evaluate the true scope of the project and undermines public trust in the process. If there are missing data or assumptions about timber production-especially if projections are being used to justify access closures or to suggest economic benefits that may not materialize-these should be clearly disclosed and explained.

Finally, I have seen issues in the past with projects that place downed trees in streams to "restore" them, such as in Camp Creek and the Middle Fork. These actions have sometimes created large, unsightly barriers that limit access and disrupt water flow, affecting both recreation and water rights. The DEIS should be clear about where and how such activities would occur, and what the expected impacts would be.

Overall, I am asking the Forest Service to provide straightforward, specific disclosure-especially with clear maps and tables-showing how the proposed actions are necessary to meet the project's stated Purpose and Need. The analysis should fully address the on-the-ground impacts to access, community use, and safety so the public can give meaningful input. Without this level of clarity and detail, it is difficult to see how the proposed actions are justified or how they truly serve the public interest.