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Organization:

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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Austin Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I have a long history of using the Summit Creek, Squaw Creek, and Bridge Creek areas for camping, mushroom hunting, and creating family memories. For over two decades, my family and friends have gathered here to collect firewood and reconnect, and these activities are a vital part of our lives and the local rural community.

I am concerned that the proposal to limit access to designated routes-especially if stored roads are not reopened-would mean the loss of cross-country travel and access to closed roads for the public. This could directly impact our ability to gather firewood and continue the household uses that have been part of our tradition for 22 years. The Draft EIS should clearly explain how these access changes are necessary to meet the project's stated Purpose and Need, rather than simply restricting long-standing uses. It is not clear from the analysis why this level of restriction is required, or how it benefits the community or the forest in ways that less limiting alternatives would not.

Additionally, I have noticed inconsistencies between the maps provided, the definitions used in the project, and statements made by staff that no road closures are happening. This lack of alignment makes it difficult for the public to understand what is truly being proposed or to trust that access will be maintained. If routes continue to be closed without new opportunities for access, it feels like the foundation is being laid for even more restrictions in the future. The project should include transparent, specific disclosure-using maps and tables where appropriate-so the public can see exactly which roads will be open, stored, or eliminated.

For these reasons, I request that all roads in the project area be changed from stored to open status unless they are truly duplicate routes that can reasonably be eliminated. The analysis should show why each closure is actually necessary to meet the project's objectives, and provide a clear rationale that the public can evaluate. When the maps and explanations do not line up, it raises concern that the agency hasn't taken a full, careful look at what this means on the ground for local residents and rural communities.

I urge the Forest Service to provide clear, specific disclosure and a thorough analysis of how these proposed actions are necessary to meet the stated Purpose and Need, so that the public can meaningfully review, comment, and continue to participate in the stewardship and enjoyment of this area.