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Comments: After reviewing the Austin Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, I am left with significant concerns about how the proposed actions-especially those related to road access-align with the project's stated Purpose and Need. The approach of designating routes as "stored roads" and limiting access only to certain designated routes effectively closes off large areas to public use, including cross-country travel and access to currently closed roads. This is a major change for those of us who rely on these areas for ATV recreation, gathering firewood, and other household uses that are important to rural residents and local communities.

The DEIS does not provide enough clear, enforceable direction to ensure continued motorized access, nor does it adequately explain why this level of restriction is necessary to meet the project's objectives. There is also a lack of a reasonable alternative that would maintain public access while addressing the stated needs. The analysis should show why less impactful options that keep roads open would not be sufficient. As it stands, the justification for closing access is not clearly tied to the project's Purpose and Need, and the documentation does not lay out how restricting motorized use will actually achieve the desired outcomes.

I am further concerned about emergency access and public safety. Limiting or closing off roads can delay response times and make it harder for residents and emergency personnel to reach certain areas. Additionally, the language used in the DEIS and on project maps is inconsistent. While staff have stated that no road closures are happening, the maps and definitions suggest otherwise. This inconsistency makes it difficult for the public to understand what is actually being proposed and raises doubts about the transparency of the process. When key information is missing or unclear, it's hard to see how the decision is based on evidence instead of assumption.

There are also issues with the assumptions and data used in the DEIS, particularly regarding timber production numbers. It appears the agency may be overstating these figures to gain favor for the project, which risks pitting supporters of motorized access against those who rely on jobs at mills that may never materialize. This kind of framing does not serve the community well and needs to be addressed with clear, grounded analysis.

Finally, I am worried about the proposed projects to place down and dead trees in streams for restoration. Past efforts in places like Camp Creek and the Middle Fork have resulted in large eyesores, limited access, and impeded water flow, affecting other uses and water rights. The DEIS should fully analyze and disclose these potential impacts so the public can understand the trade-offs.

I urge the Forest Service to withdraw the DEIS until a complete and transparent analysis is done. All roads currently designated as "stored" should be shown as open on the maps, and the agency should provide clear, specific disclosures-including accurate maps and tables-explaining how the proposed actions are necessary to meet the project's Purpose and Need. Only with this information can the public meaningfully review and comment on the project.