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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Austin Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I am not personally aware of the mineral resources that may be located within the Austin Project. I do personally know that there are considerable mineral resources located in the area adjoining the Austin project.

My primary concern is that the proposed restrictions set aside certain areas for limited use. The closing (storing) of many roads that have been historically used, and are still being used is also a concern. There is no actual evidence that these closures will do anything to improve the watershed. It will definitely reduce access for those of us who rely on being able to reach potentially mineral-rich locations. This kind of access is vital to providing forest users the ability to prosper from the use of the resources of the National Forest.

When this land was designated as National Forest, there was a clear understanding that the public would continue to have access to its resources. Limiting access now, undermines that promise, and reduces opportunities for people to support themselves and contribute to the nation's resource needs.

I urge the Forest Service to examine whether there are any active or inactive mining claims in the project area, and to conduct a thorough geological assessment to identify any potentially minerally enriched zones. This information is critical for understanding the real impacts of the proposed actions on those who depend on resource use, and should be clearly disclosed in the analysis.

The Draft EIS includes broad statements about the effects of human activity and claims that the area is in decline, but there seems to be little concrete evidence provided to support these generalizations. In my experience, and based on local history, there was actually more human use and occupation in the area in the past, and there has been considerably less human use by logging, grazing, and mining in the last fifty years, yet you claim the area is in decline.

The DEIS should provide specific, factual evidence for any claims about forest decline due to human use, and ensure that its conclusions are grounded in on-the-ground data rather than assumptions. I request that the Forest Service provide clear, specific disclosure-using maps and tables where appropriate-about access, mineral potential, and the relationship between proposed restrictions and the project's stated Purpose and Need. The analysis should demonstrate why these particular access limitations are necessary to achieve the project's objectives and consider whether less restrictive alternatives, could still meet the same goals. Without this level of detail and transparency, it is difficult for the public to fully understand and comment on the tradeoffs being proposed.