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First name: Angela

Last name: Gamble

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Angela Gamble, and I am submitting this comment based on my concerns about how the Austin Project will affect my family, their neighbors, and the community they live in.

I am very concerned about what the Forest Service keeps saying about "no road closures." From what I understand, many of these roads are being labeled as "stored," but those roads are still open and used by people like my family and others in their community. If those roads are treated as closed, then access is being lost whether the agency calls it a closure or not.

One of my biggest concerns is safety.

My family lives in a fire-prone area, and those roads are not just for recreation - they are how people get in and out. If roads are closed or blocked, that affects:

how quickly people can get out during a wildfire, and

how quickly firefighters can get in to respond.

In an emergency, every minute matters. Limiting access by closing or "storing" roads could make a dangerous situation even worse.

I am also very concerned about how this will affect my family's ability to take care of others in their community.

They rely on these roads for subsistence uses like:

gathering firewood,

hunting, and

accessing areas they have used for years.

This is not just a hobby for them. It is part of how they live.

My husband's parents, other family members, and an elderly neighbor all rely on them to help gather firewood for winter heat. If access to these roads is reduced, it directly affects their ability to take care of those people.

That is not a small impact. That is a real, day-to-day consequence of what is being proposed.

More broadly, this feels like a slow loss of a way of life for that community.

The ability to go into the forest, gather what you need, help your neighbors, and pass that on to your kids - that is part of the culture in that area. It feels like decisions like this are chipping away at that, little by little.

I also want to say that I do not agree with the idea that the public is causing the level of damage that is often used to justify these decisions.

From what I have personally seen, and from what my family experiences, the Forest Service's own actions -

especially road work, closures, and decommissioning - often cause more visible and lasting damage than everyday use by people who live there and respect the land.

That makes it hard to accept that closing roads is being presented as necessary to protect the forest.

I am not against managing the forest. I understand the need for fuels reduction and responsible logging.

But I do not believe that should come at the cost of taking away access from the people who live there and depend on it.

If the Forest Service truly does not intend to close roads, then that needs to be clearly reflected in the maps and in the final decision - not just in words.

If these roads are going to remain open and usable, then they should be designated that way.

If they are not, then the agency should be honest about what is actually happening.

I am asking the Forest Service to:

Keep roads open that are currently open and used,

Make sure emergency access is not reduced,

Consider the real impacts to families and communities, and

Respect the way of life that people in that community have depended on for generations.

This project affects more than just the forest. It affects the people who live there.

Angela Gamble