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Comments:

I support active management and rural forest infrastructure. I support forest management that reduces wildfire risk, restores forest health, and improves forage conditions for big game. The final plans should also provide a dependable supply of forest products that helps sustain Eastern Oregon's remaining mills and workforce, because that infrastructure is essential to accomplishing restoration work. Active management should be paired with measurable habitat and watershed protections so that economic and ecological benefits occur together.

Keep elk on public lands. The final plans should include a clear, measurable standard for elk security so that elk stay distributed across public lands where the public can hunt them, rather than concentrating on private property. Open, well-traveled roads are the single biggest factor in where elk spend their time during hunting season. The final plans should include direction on open road density and seasonal access so that habitat investments actually translate into elk on the ground. Improved forage does not help if the road network keeps elk away from it.

Carry forward the locally crafted desired conditions for elk security. The Blue Mountains Intergovernmental Council, made up of county governments, Tribes, and state and federal agencies, developed an agreed-upon desired condition for elk security. The Forest Service should honor collaborative work and build it into the final plans.

Use the Starkey science. Decades of research from the Starkey Experimental Forest, located within these very forests, tell us what elk need to stay on public lands. The final plans should reflect that best available science in an enforceable direction, not set it aside.

Protect cold, clean water and salmon habitat. The Blues hold some of the west's most important headwaters of cold, clean salmon streams in the west. The final plans should include clear and enforceable direction for riparian areas, stream temperature, sediment, floodplain and wetland function, and road-related impacts. Restoration treatments should improve the habitat needed by salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and other native fish.

Retain core roadless protections. Roadless areas provide secure big-game habitat, intact headwaters, and important backcountry hunting and fishing opportunities. The final plans should retain protections against unnecessary permanent roads while allowing targeted restoration and temporary access where appropriate.

Recognize the value of hunting and fishing. Hunting is the most popular recreational activity on these forests and a significant driver of the rural economy. Wild game is a meaningful source of locally harvested food for families across eastern Oregon. The final plans should recognize and sustain that opportunity."

Please proceed carefully in this management opportunity of this unique environment.

Thank you.