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Comments: The Blue Mountains region in north eastern Oregon, including mountain ranges like the Elkhorns, Wallowas, and the North Fork of the John Day river, are part of one of the most underrated and beautiful corners of the state. This area is incredibly unique and important, home to many matured forests, wilderness areas, endangered wildlife, and is also one of the only mountainous wildlife corridors connecting the Rocky Mountains to the Cascades.

I have personally spent countless hours recreating in this space, including mountain biking the Elkhorn Crest Traverse unsupported, hiking to alpine lakes in the Wallowas, and many nights camping in-between. It's easy to see first hand how damaged this landscape has become, whether its abandoned mines and tailing piles from centuries past tainting streams and watersheds, clear cuts poorly re-planted with a monoculture of the same tree for the benefit of timber companies, or wildfire burn scars caused by those very replantings of dense, unhealthy forest. Both the Elkhorns and Wallowas have very few untouched sections of mature and old growth forests and pristine watersheds left, and the last thing this region needs is more logging and profit driven management threatening those fragile and important areas.

I believe an increase in logging in this region is not the answer going forward. While this may create some short term economic growth in the area, short sighted profit focused decisions are the last thing we need in an increasingly unstable and dangerous climate-change driven world. Instead, habitat protection and rehabilitation should be the most important considerations in the Blue Mountain forest plan going forward. Rehabilitated lands benefit our watersheds and drinking water, endangered species, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, and the communities around them with long term recreation focused economic growth. I urge the Umatilla Forest Service to carefully evaluate and consider the intrinsic value of this corner of north eastern Oregon, and in doing so make sure that these areas of roadless national forest and wilderness continue to be protected and unharmed.