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Comments: The Chelan Ranger District and how my tax dollars are spent there matter to me, and this project raises questions I need the agency to answer before the decision is final.

The first question is about process. The agency states in its environmental analysis, under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Section 40807, that "The subsequent environmental analysis on emergency actions is not subject to the objections process under 36 CFR 218." That sentence eliminates the standard public objection period for a 30,167-acre, 20-year project. The agency should explain, plainly and specifically, what emergency conditions justify bypassing the objection process at this scale and duration. If those conditions cannot be clearly articulated, the standard 36 CFR 218 objection period should be restored and the agency should carry that analysis into its final decision.

The second question concerns economics. In the Road Maintenance, Haul Routes, and Temporary Roads section, the agency states that "Minimal hauling is planned as there currently are no markets for much of the material that would result from proposed treatments." Yet elsewhere the agency asserts that long-term economic effects are largely beneficial, including improved protection of timber resources. Those two positions sit uneasily together: the agency should reconcile them and provide an actual market and economic analysis rather than claiming broad benefits from material it acknowledges cannot currently be sold or used. The agency must carry that reconciled analysis into the decision.

The third question is about whether the project's own rationale holds together across its 20-year timeline. The agency's climate projections describe substantial portions of the forested planning area shifting to non-forest over time due to moisture stress, yet the EA does not analyze whether that same trend undermines the effectiveness of a 20-year mechanical thinning and prescribed fire program designed to keep those stands healthy and forested. If the trees being treated are projected to give way to non-forest regardless of treatment, the agency owes the public an honest accounting of what the program actually accomplishes and at what cost. The agency should analyze how projected moisture-driven forest-to-non-forest conversion affects both the rationale and the cost-effectiveness of the proposed treatment schedule before this decision is finalized.

Responsible management of this land means answering hard questions, not routing around the processes that exist to make the agency answer them. I ask that the agency address each of these points before it commits public funds to this project.