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First name: Amy
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest draws me out there to hike, camp, watch wildlife and birds, and take pictures. I want this land managed responsibly, with my tax money spent in ways that reflect that. The Whitman Post-Fire Recovery project, as proposed, does not meet that standard, and I oppose it.

The Anthony, Olive Butte, and McCully fire areas are in the early stages of natural recovery. Post-fire landscapes, left with appropriate protections, can regenerate watersheds, stabilize soils, and restore habitat. The proposed project, however, appears oriented toward the extraction of commercial forest products rather than toward those ecological priorities. The agency has not demonstrated that watershed protection and natural regeneration are driving this project rather than timber revenue. I ask the agency to explain, plainly and specifically, how it weighs commercial extraction against watershed recovery across all three fire areas, and to put that explanation in the record so the public can evaluate it.

The wildlife and birds I go out there to watch, and hope to photograph, depend on post-fire habitat that is left to function. Burned forests support species that need standing dead wood, open canopy, and undisturbed soil. Logging operations, even those framed as fuels management, can cause lasting harm to these resources and to the rare plants that also depend on post-fire conditions. The agency has not shown that the pace and scale of proposed activities on the Whitman Ranger District account for those recovery needs. The agency must address how wildlife, birds, and rare plants in these three fire areas will be protected if ground-disturbing operations proceed before natural recovery processes have had time to establish themselves.

I care how public land is managed and how public money is spent. This project, as described, does not give me confidence that either is being handled with the care these landscapes require.