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First name: Katherine
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: I hunt upland game across Oregon every fall, and I have hiked and camped on the Wallowa-Whitman with my family for years, in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, at the Anthony Lake Campground, at the Fish Lake Campground, and in other quiet spots away from crowds. I also took photographs there of landscapes, wildlife, birds, streams, and fisheries. I used to live in Cove and worked in La Grande, and I drank and enjoyed the clean water coming off this forest. A project covering 7,402 acres between three large fires is a change at a scale that should have drawn far more careful analysis than I see here.

Start with what the agency says about scenery. Section 3.4.2 states that post-fire harvest leaves openings where nearly all trees are removed, and that "The effect is like that of a clear-cut or other treatment that creates an opening." The same section then relies on design criteria to claim scenic integrity objectives will be met over the long term. It never says how long that term is for each forest type, and it never discloses which scenic integrity objectives apply to the affected units. Someone who goes to this forest for landscapes needs to know whether clear-cut-equivalent openings can meet those objectives within any defined period. Show that analysis, with the objectives for each unit listed.

The agency also admits in Section 2.3.6 that opponents of salvage cite peer-reviewed science, including Hutto and Gallo 2006 and Noss et al. 2006, arguing that salvage damages burned sites and removes dead trees with real ecological value. That conflict is introduced and then dropped. The socioeconomic analysis simply asserts benefits and reaches a finding of no significant impact without testing what happens if the ecological-harm side is right. I fear the damage to waterways and to the fisheries that depend on clean water, and I do not see that question answered. The agency should analyze salvage against no salvage using the very science it cites before concluding impacts are insignificant.

On recreation, Section 3.4.4 says "there may be reduced trail opportunities and public access in some areas if maintenance level one (storage) roads used as trails are converted to permanent or temporary roads". The document never says how many miles are involved, how long conversion would last, or how many users would lose access, yet it concludes in Section 3.5 that there are no significant adverse recreation impacts. A known adverse effect left unmeasured cannot support that conclusion. How many miles of trail or storage road are at risk of conversion, and what does that cost recreationists?

As a taxpayer, I also want a full accounting of costs: NEPA, sale preparation, administration, planting, and monitoring. Responsible management means weighing the salvage against recreation, wildlife, and watershed disturbance, not treating timber volume as the only output. I have enjoyed the Wallowa-Whitman as a beautiful destination and would hate to see its beauty, wildlife, and watershed lost to indiscriminate salvage logging. Please answer each of these points directly.