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Organization:

Title:

Comments: [External Email]2020 Fire Affected Road System Risk Reduction Project

Please consider our comments. Access to our public lands is utmost to our lifestyle.

Thank you,

Randy and Mona Drake

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Text of Attached Letter:

July 15, 2022

Willamette National Forest

Supervisor's Office

3106 Pierce Parkway Suite D

Springfield OR 97477

Subject: 2020 Fire Affected Road System Risk Reduction Project

Attn: David Warnack/Elsa Gustavson

The citizens of the United States; particularly the citizens of Oregon are being denied access to all portions of the Willamette National Forest. Why is this? All portions of the Willamette National Forest are owned by the citizens of this great nation. It is beyond rationality that due to fire almost two years ago our access is still being denied. Our access to all portions of this forest needed re-opened over a year ago. We are being denied access because of fire almost two years ago is not right.

What is the Willamette National Forest Department of Agriculture duties to the American public for having continued and un-interrupted access to our lands. In one hand you are saying there is or was no funds available for clearing dead fall from road beds, clearing the roadsides from potential dead and dying trees that possibly could cause damage to humans and motorized vehicles, not clearing roadsides allowing mud slides to take out road ways and possible human lives, re-building roads destroyed by fire and damaged by fire crews, clearing all drainages along roadways and keeping them cleared, replacing or repairing culverts alongside of road ways purposely for water drainage, due to fire and its remains creating new drainages that could easily destroy mountain sides leaving new drainage that cannot be restored into the existing water path, removing dead and dying trees from drainages above and below that most likely will block water flow and destroy existing roads below and property damage as it floods cascading down the mountain side, pushing tons of fire debris, overflowing existing drainages that have been created by hundreds of years of water, fire debris and filthy water entering streams and rivers destroying entire aquatic systems, water out of its normal path pushing fire debris into all stream and rivers changing their flow patterns perhaps forever.

This is simple visual context; anyone can view or could have viewed since 2020-today at any given time. Just stop and look surely one needs no scientific evidence to back up ones' present visual observation. This complete burnt area is changing its own landscape and the current road system is suffering considerably and is just part of the devastation. If roads had of been restored right away the damage would be neglectable.

In the other hand Willamette National Forest Department of Agriculture could have easily done what the citizens of America and particularly the citizens of Oregon expected you to do within weeks of the fire, not years. Oregon communities completely or nearly destroyed by fire. Communities in many cases no longer having any local jobs, homes, farms, business, vehicles, or any means at all doing or going to work. Instead of taking matters into your own hands and allowing locals to reopen roads, Salvage the dead and dying trees, prioritizing your own Department of Agriculture employees into the forest finding and assisting the local and national citizens in gaining access to the forest lands. Finding and working with the citizens to get all salvageable dead and dying fir trees out of the forest quickly. Salvage operation should of began months ago when the dead and dying burnt timber had significant higher value as fir timber does have; alive, dead, or dying from fire. Now many more are dying of insects that are being attracted to the dead and dying fir trees. Still, no salvage of the dead or dying fir trees is being allowed; you are allowing them just to rot away by millions of Salvageable fir trees. Millions of dollars could have been Salvage from dead and dying trees in which would have paid for all work (or mostly paid for) that must be and needs to be done in these burned areas. What a senseless waste of our national natural resources.

Willamette National Forest and Department of Agriculture did not allow Salvage of a dead and dying trees instead; you closed the roads. The citizens of Oregon, citizens of America, and particularly the devastated towns which are within these burns stare not at Salvage crews at work but at closed road signs. Salvage crews, road crews, forest service crews and as each road is reopened to forest users and tourist is not happening. All of these providing jobs to these devastated communities. With each motorized vehicle and there working crews disappearing into a burnt forest, restoring it as it was before. Would of pass through these communities spending monies for fuel, food, supplies, water and other small commodities, milk shakes, bug spray etc. This would have been a boon to these communities. With each passing day (since the fire was consider under control) the value of dead and dying trees has decreased and the crews get smaller and smaller as there is less and less value to be gathered from the forest. The tourists are not there that would have been using the forest as the roads are closed and the local communities continue to suffer. The question that comes to mind is why you are punishing these Oregon communities? Have they not suffered enough? It seems the Willamette National Forest Department of Agriculture is not considering the economics of those the fire has so devastated in their very back yard and in some; all they had. The bottom line here is each day Willamette National Forest does nothing the value of our dead and dying trees goes down and the communities continue in their misery from lack of forest user. Instead of stopping they are just passing through as where else is there to go with not roads to explore.

It is not acceptable to leave these trees in the forest to simply rot away. These trees have value to many and not allowing them to be salvage/harvested needs a very hard look at by the Willamette National Forest Department of Agriculture.

It must be understood by Willamette National Forest Department of Agriculture by now that the anti-motorized extremist does understand that delaying your action will contribute to closing the roads forever. If the value of the salvageable trees continues to go down the need for roads are needless. Each day trees become less valued; the less monies you have in your coffers to repair the road system as it was before the fire. Therefore, it is a win for them as each road is consider forever closed by you; the land becomes roadless.

As Willamette National Forest close even the tiniest dead-end road we the Americancitizen loses. We truly believe you know this and will not accept even closing the smallest road to be permanently closed.

We agree with you that chipping dead and dying trees for any reason is better than burning forest debris. If any can be used for biomass, please do so wherever possible. It is better to spread the chippings out on the forest floor or on roadways containing dust and erosion where possible. Chipping is much more preferable than to burning.

We the Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive Association have actively been involved with Region 6 Forest since the

mid-50s. In both Washington, Oregon, and Idaho (understanding Idaho is not in region 6) we have actively work with the forest service keeping roads open. We (I personally) have reopened, maintained, and even built forest roads and trails working with the Willamette National Forest. Many of these old roads have been closed for years due to regrowth of trees, down trees due to fires, wind and natural causes and brush. We worked to reopen them by removing the brush, trees, cleared landslides and boulders from old hardly used roads to keep them open to all forest users.

It is written in the National Register that 97 percent of all Americans enter US Forest Service lands in or on a motorized vehicle. Where do they go? I wonder how many millions of American citizens (particularly Oregon citizens) enter lands within the Willamette National Forest boundaries in any giving year? It is most likely a scientific equation would not be needed to collect the data needed here. However, if a thousand motorized units disappeared into the forest at Mill City for example, it could be easily proven that most within a short time could not be found on a Level 5-Level 3 road any longer. These roads are maintained for transportation and low clearance vehicles to travel to and from designated area. So why did almost all disappear from these Level 5-Level 3 roads?

These motorized units have all sorts of forest users. Some are greener than the trees they pass by for sure, but they are there. They pretend that they are against motorized access but there really is no other way to be there. They are there with the rest of the forest users whether for work or recreation. Some bring mountain bikes, hiking shoes, mountain climbing gear, mushroom, nuts, berry, plant gathers, for scenic views (which includes landscapes, plants and forest animals. Motorbikes, sidebikes, quads, hunters of all type plants and animals, trappers, trackers, picnics, social gatherings, horseback riders, fishermen and women, touring the scenic forest, camping on the forest floor or within their motorized unit, four-wheeling. Some of these will just stay for the day. Many will camp in any open camp site they can find, and others will only camp in dispersed camp sites throughout the forest. Many will find peace and solitude on very little used roads just driving around in the forest. Others, stopping often, going for short walks, out of other motorized units' way, on little or hardly used road. These roads are not Level 5-Level 3 roads. Most are looking for the less used, old road they can find. A dead-end road is perfect for an undisturbed camp spot, a short rest or nap listening to the wind blow through the land, a quiet place for conversations between friends. A place to park and begin a hike or hunt into the wilderness. Many citizens value these dead-end roads immensely and look and find the most unused road that is available to them. Ending or begin the day or days of total solitude; sitting in their motorized vehicle, hammock stretched from tree to vehicle door jam or sitting in a lawn chair feeling the breeze toss ones' hairs about. Just them and US Forest Lands that are available to motorized access.

What is the point? It is simple; within as few minutes as possible these motorized units stay on a Level 5-Level 3 roads. Most of these humans inside or on those motorized units have one desire and that is to find the most unused, hardly ever used, roads to access the areas they desire to get to. It must be said to explore is within most of us and Level 5-Level 3 roads have been explored to death and most are here to experience new levels of exploration. This can only be found on those old Level 2-Level 1 roads particularly the ones rarely use by other motorized units. We the American public need these old roads.

It must be repeated in these written words that access for firefighting rigs and crews, search and rescue, emergency responders to always have access to all parts of these forests. It must be mentioned again these little and dead-end roads are extremely close to wilderness and the only access is on these little, hardly used roads. Roads that could easily allow an injured forest user aid or swift removal perhaps saving a life. Carry an injured person is very difficult and the closer the road, sooner aid can be professionally provided.

It apparently is also necessary to remind Willamette National Forest that disable veterans, disable citizens, and older humans want to access your forest. Many of us do not have any other way to access this forest but in/on a motorized vehicle. It is not desirable to sit alongside, camp next to, a built road for transportation and low clearance vehicles to come zooming by dusting us out. We have a right to access your lesser traveled roads

which will allow us access to quiet places. Places that rarely offer a good dusting while using forest lands.

Each road also provides an additional fire brake. Aiding or stopping a fire and surely can be built easily into much larger fire line if opened allowing access.

Almost all roads aid in drainage, directing water runoff to natural drainages. Natural drainages are very important to the forest itself. Most roads have been built with that in mind as replacing a washed-out road is costly and prevents access.

It must be remembered that access to this fire was denied by the road's way being too small, it is not the roadbed that will stop a tanker but the width that the foliage is cut back. At end of the road the tanker and fire crew must be able to turn around. Not only one but the water truck must get there as well. All must be able to turn around and be able to escape quickly if the fire over runs them. When a fire over runs it is moving very quickly and the trucks and heavy equipment must be able to move faster.

We ask for your consideration to not close any roads within Beachie Creek Fire, Lionshead Fire, Holiday Farm Fire that were open to public use prior to being burnt. We ask that you reopen all roads that have been in any way blocked by downed/felled trees or trees threatened to fall onto roads. If that needs to be 300 feet or more here and there that is what needs to be done. Locking yourselves to 100 feet is setting up another day to go back and redoing the job correctly for safety concerns or to control drainage.

We are offering our help in clearing some of the lesser used roads if monies cannot be found to reopen them. We truly believe that Willamette National Forest should give a very hard look at the economic loss and historic use before closing any roads permanently. Roads that are beyond your financial means to be reopened [ldquo]we[rdquo] the public should be contacted to assist in reopening them. It is our intention to keep these roads open to motorized use forever. The US population is growing, and it is important to us and to the Willamette National Forest to allow access to all of your lands for these motorized units. As the population grows so does the motorized units entering these forest lands. We need more forested lands to operate our vehicles and less roads only impacts the lands in a negative overuse of a natural landscape. We honestly expect you to keep this access open to all forest users which include motorized use whether for work and all forms of outdoor recreation. It is our belief that the Willamette National Forest should be committed to keeping all roads open for accessing its lands burnt or not.

Respectively submitted by Randell Drake

Oregon State Director of the Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive Association, Member of Blue-Ribbon Coalition, Member of Deschutes County 4-Wheelers

a citizen of the United States of America and disable Veteran of Vietnam War