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Comments:

Ayn Shlisky

18 February 2016

Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team Lead

Umatilla National Forest

72510 Coyote Road

Pendleton, Oregon 97801

Re: Forest Resiliency Project

Dear Ayn Shlisky and Team,

I am writing with respect to the Forest Resiliency Project for the Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy. Please accept these comments and please use them in planning for this important project.

I very much favor this project. It is sorely needed and long overdue. Overcrowding of our National Forests has been a primary concern of mine; the past several years of stand eliminating fires have exacerbated that concern. Indeed, this issue has become one in the national spotlight due to the huge, stand-eliminating fires and due to the loss of fire fighters lives during suppression.

Thoughtful thinning will help reduce/eliminate this type of fire and will promote a healthier environment for forests, for forest dwelling animals and for those of us that use those forests. Thinning will also help the local and national economies and will provide a source of wood material for homes, paper and other products.

I recommend that in order to achieve the maximum good for our forests that tree diameter class cut restrictions be eliminated. Unwanted forest pests such as mistletoe can be partially eliminated via thinning and will help restrict further infestations and/or spreading of those pests. Mistletoed trees are particularly at-risk for crown-fire events due to the amount and density of fuels in the mistletoed areas of each tree. Once a crown fire begins, it is very difficult to then stop that fire (as you are well aware of).

I also recommend that the Forest Service select various, relatively large areas that are particularly accessible and allow thinning to occur via firewood gathering. Areas where the principal species are lodgepole pine, Douglas fir and larch would be ideal areas to select for this purpose. Areas along existing roadways would be ideal. Many of us who depend upon firewood to heat our homes cut recently dead timber from windfall timber, from insect caused tree mortality and other mortality causes and use a rotation process within our firewood lots to ensure that we burn only properly seasoned firewood. By announcing areas where this type of tree thinning would occur, more firewood gatherers will also be motivated to cut their firewood one year and then burn it the next. Over a multi-year period, large areas of readily accessible land would be thinned. Of course, a relatively short cutting season would occur on this type of thinning as restrictions will necessarily need to be made to ensure that those areas are properly dry and that wood is cut and removed before those areas become too dry to safely access the targeted trees.

(My definition of "readily accessible" relates to areas where land is not steep. It does not relate to miles from "home". If areas are identified, cutters will come!)

Trees in the six-inch stump diameter and larger size category would be best and a requirement to use the

entire bole down to a minimum of 4" would be necessary so that firewood gatherers properly use the resource. Resulting slash could be hand-piled by those cutting firewood, or a "scatter the debris" technique could be used if that would be better for the site.

Thank you,
Rick Isaacson
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