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April 5th, 2016

Blue Mountain Resiliency Project - Ochoco Mountains

Reviewing Officer:

Attached is my letter and response reflecting the Blue Mountain Restoration Project for the Ochoco National Forest.

I believe the project is an amazing project though my concern is the strategy or build out of the project has not been fully communicated and vested to the residents of Crook County. I understand the scope of the project though I am not entirely sure how to comment on the proposed project when there has yet to be a budget tied to the broadness of it.

I was able to attend the Resiliency meeting Wednesday, March 16th in Prineville/Bowman museum. My take away from the meeting was obscure knowing there was not a detailed plan emphasizing the 118,000 acre project and its compilation.

The project mentions thinning and prescribed fire treatments and talks of restoration though again, how does one comment on a project without knowing where you plan to utilize resources. It would be helpful knowing USFS has budgeted dollars for the entire project with a 10 year build out. Applying a 10 year project completion date working 11.8 per year for 10 years. Graphing out the scope of the project by levels of severity (1-10). Then fielding the work to most critical areas needing most attention (TODAY).

In 10 years, a fire could take out a portion of the 118,000 proposed lands and or nature could sway the need to address a balanced region.

I also have concern we are only looking to thin landscapes and not address the fuel on the forest floor beyond just burning grass. Additionally, we broke in groups during the March 16th meeting discussing canopied habitats, streams, plans and how wild life would be effected. There were several additional topics as well that spurred conversation. All things to consider though commenting on how nature and canopied critters will be affect with a resiliency project is putting the cart before the horse without detail plan of completion.

I understand the threat to the Blue Mountain National forest and boundaries, requiring collaboration efforts with affiliated groups and agencies, and land owners.

This large scale landscape resiliency project will take strategy, and a coordinated, collaborative effort moving forward. I am a member of the CCNR, PAC, and am vested in communicating voice to projects moving forward. There has got to be a better way to cultivate reach to the residents broadly for projects moving forward. Having 30 people in a room filtering the voice of 20,780 residents raises my eyebrows and we must work better together sharing information broadly.

Thank you

Brett Nelson  
Lifetime resident, Crook County, Prineville, OR