

NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON FOREST HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

November 25, 2014

Forest Supervisor Michael Balboni
c/o District Ranger Matthew Reidy
Tonasket Ranger District
1 West Winesap Street
Tonasket WA 98855

Dear Supervisor Balboni,

Thank you for requesting input from the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC) on the Tonasket Ranger District's proposal on the Light Restoration Project. The NCWFHC Projects Workgroup appreciates the District open house on October 28 and preliminary materials that have been available on the website:

http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=44628

THE NCWFHC is interested in increasing the pace and scale of restoration on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF), and strongly supports projects that achieve this goal. Moreover, in 2012, Washington State's Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark declared a Forest Health Hazard Warning for eastern Okanogan and Ferry Counties, so the Light Restoration Project is in a high priority work area.

We hope the Forest Service will be able to implement prescriptions designed to make the forest more resilient to warmer, dryer weather and climate; create an appropriate range of vegetation conditions; provide a sustainable and well-maintained road system that balances natural resource protection and needs for resource management and recreational access; support stable, functional streams and banks; and render the area more fire resilient. Moreover, the NCWFHC places high value on restoration treatments that also result in social and economic benefits for local communities. These benefits include employment opportunities, wood products, healthier watersheds, and reduced risk of uncharacteristic effects from insects and disease, which lead to uncharacteristic fire behavior. We hope that the comprehensive package of proposed activities will accomplish these goals.

We appreciate that some currently unauthorized roads have been analyzed and this project provides a vital opportunity to address them. All road miles analyzed in the project, whether decommissioned, opened, or closed post-project, should include a plan for appropriate monitoring and maintenance.

In order to ensure the Light Restoration project is implemented in a cost-effective and socially-beneficial way, the NCWFHC can support the project in the following ways:

- Help analyze potential costs and revenues, and identify strategies to increase the economic viability of the project.
- Leverage resources for project implementation (need to know specific amount of resources needed and for which actions).
- Publicize NCWFHC support for project implementation.

- Develop zones of agreement among NCWFHC members, through project discussions and field trips, which can be used by OWNF in planning future projects that will also have broad community support.

In order to provide this support to the District, and to provide more detailed comments on the project, the NCWFHC requests the following information about specific aspects of the proposed project:

- Is the October 28 "Preliminary Light Proposed Action As of October 28," (distributed at the Open House) in fact, an initial proposal? Its footprint activity area covers a more extensive area than the "20140924 Light Draft Treatment Areas" (on website) which does not include the northeastern portion of the project area near Bonaparte Lake. Is the northeastern area actually part of the project? With the inclusion of the northeastern area, will more than the "(estimated) acres of timber harvest (1500), ladder fuel reduction (500), precommercial thinning (1000) and fuels treatment (3000)" (stated on the website) be proposed? We support the analysis of the more extensive area and, if a significant area has been dropped from ongoing analysis, would like to understand the reason.
- The vegetation treatments: What are the prescriptions and the structure, composition and pattern of vegetation that will remain after treatments? The October 28 "Preliminary Light Proposed Action" map (distributed at the Open House) has a diversity of proposed action titles in its Legend, but does not provide insight into the current vegetation structure and condition, the amount and size of material that needs to be removed, and the target vegetation size and density parameters of those treatments on specific, numbered management units. We'd like to learn more detail about specific current conditions and future vision.
- The expected costs and revenues associated with the proposed project.
- More detail about the riparian elements of the proposal. The Open House presenters mentioned the desire to implement bank stabilization and woody debris restoration in certain stream reaches. Where are they and what would this accomplish?

The NCWFHC looks forward to continued collaboration on large-scale restoration projects in the Tonasket Ranger District. The NCWFHC is committed to finding efficient and productive ways to engage with the District to increase the pace of restoration, a goal shared by the NCWFHC and the Forest Service.

Please contact Melody Kreimes, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board and NCWFHC facilitator, (509) 888-0321 or melody.kreimes@ucsrb.org, with any questions.

Sincerely,



Paul Ward, Yakama Nation
NCWFHC Co-Chair



Lloyd McGee, The Nature Conservancy
NCWFHC Co-Chair