

November 17, 2001

Please accept these comments on the Toolbox Fire recovery project DEIS.

I encourage the Forest Service to drop its preferred alternative due to the devastating affects it will have to this ecosystem and select Alternative D. Alternative D offers a compromise between some commercial salvage and also staying out of sensitive areas and not overdoing it with massive extraction and damaging ground based yarding as the preferred alternative does. It is very important that you select this alternative so that the Forest Service does not become skewed by proposing massive timber sales after every fire. If this becomes habit, the Forest Service is doing a disservice to the land.

Alternative D also includes the greatest amount of road decommissioning or closure of any action alternative so jobs will be created doing this important and abundant work. It focuses commercial harvest on hazard treatment areas and in areas that might have high fuel accumulations. Lord knows we need to begin "focusing" our commercial harvest. Unlike the other action alternatives, D will not degrade out fragile and pristine water supply that Oregon is so fortunate to have and should cultivate for future generations. It is very important that alternative D stays out of the Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. No new road construction is absolutely vital to sustaining the functioning ecosystems we have left, especially into fragile riparian areas. Alternative D show is much more balanced.

The snag retention is a vital aspect to post fire management. It seems obvious that species that evolved to exploit post-fire ecosystems are being selected against by the recent strategy of heavily logging post fire forests. Woodpeckers are often abundant in these post-fire ecosystems pre-salvage. Birds such as northern flicker, Lewis's woodpecker and mountain bluebird will not find suitable habitat in the planning area if all trees over 21 inches dbh are taken. Alternative D will leave abundant snags for these post-fire species. I am also worried that the preferred alternative would ensure that very few cavity dependent species would utilize the salvaged portion of the Toolbox Fire burn area. You are not supposed to supply fiber to people at the expense of the entire ecosystem. These and many other post-fire species are suffering from lack of habitat. The wilderness areas are far too small to sustain the biodiversity our national forests contain. Fire suppression was historically successful at greatly reducing the total acreage burned. Now, the Forest Service justifies the presence of more intense fire by logging the post-fire landscape. The large diameter trees are commonly removed, which are the best habitat for cavity nesters. Private forest lands are not providing habitat for fire dependent species because they are largely cut over and have burned rapidly in recent fires leaving a desert like landscape. The Forest Service should make it common practice to leave large areas of post-fire habitat for dependent species. Alternative D does. The proposed alternative will leave a desert looking landscape that is reforested with homogenous aged stands totally susceptible to intense fire. You are pushing these landscapes the wrong direction by taking out the big trees. So I urge you to select Alternative D.

Sincerely, David Mildrexler  
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