



Jurgen A. Hess Environmental Planner

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Re: comments on Climate Change and Forest Policy

To: Columbia River Gorge Commission:

My background/experience: Worked for the US Forest Service for 34 years as a manager and planner. I sat on the Gorge Commission representing the Forest Service. Since retiring from the Forest Service I do environmental planning consultation with an emphasis on forest restoration, resource protection, wildfire ecology and native plants. I was on the South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative for 10 years. As an award winning photographer, I give presentations on wildfires, such as the Eagle Creek Fire and inform landowners what they can do to protect their homes from fire such as the *Firewise* measures.

These are my comments given to the Gorge Commission October 12, 2021

- Maintain the 2017 fire break that was done west of Hood River during the Eagle Creek Fire. There will be more fires in this area; we should be ready and prepared for the next one. This fire break used existing logging roads; just cleared them to open them up for a back burn.
- Close NSA/Forest Service lands to recreation at high fire danger times—red flag times. There is precedence for doing this:
 - USFS closed the Eagle Creek Trail and other recreation sites in the 1940's during high fire danger. This should have happened in 2017.
 - DNR closed their lands at the peak of the 2021 fire season
 - The whole Mt. Hood National Forest was closed in August/September of 2020 during the high fire danger period.
 - NSA Forest Supervisor Donna Mickley should do the early coordination and liaison with the Counties so that when it's needed they will support NF land closures. She has authority to close NFS lands with or without local concurrence.
- Create definitive and measurable standards for fire protection vegetation clearing around proposed houses. That standard should be different for houses on flatter ground vs steeper ground. If those standards cannot be met due to conflicts with scenic resource protection, deny the application.
- I support doing prescribed fire after getting fuel loading down and doing thinning. The Forest Service's 100 year history of putting out all fires has created a huge fuel buildup.

Thank you for the work you are doing to address climate change and creating advice and direction on making forests more resilient, protecting resources and making homes safer.

Sincerely,

/s/ *Jurgen A. Hess*

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