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December 20, 2012

Janine Clayton, Forest Supervisor
Gifford Pinchot National Forest
10600 NE 51st Circle
Vancouver, WA 98682

Dear Ms. Clayton,

I am writing to add my comments to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Roads Analysis that is currently being conducted by the USFS. It is my understanding that the input provided at the recent informational meetings will be used to help the agency identify a sustainable road system for the forest that best meets the priorities and needs of the public, while also protecting our natural resources. Based on feedback from residents of my district, I see the potential to better meet safety, budgetary savings, forest health, and recreation objectives by adopting the right set of forest road management strategies.

I am concerned that the agency may be focused only towards road reduction, rather than also focusing on revenue possibilities that may alleviate some of the funding challenges that exist. In addition to providing positive financial benefits for the agency and our rural communities, active forest management and harvests will promote forest health and can be used to create a variety of age classes within the forest to benefit a broad spectrum of species. This has the potential to be particularly beneficial to those species that have been harmed through the single species management practices of the last two decades.

I have had several residents from my district contact my office to discuss the roads analysis issue and they have shared the following thoughts and concerns. Although I am aware that your process is asking for specific road closure and maintenance recommendations, I feel it is important to address these principles that I hope will be applied to the decision making process:

- Avoid road decommissioning and protect road beds for future use by maximizing the conversion of roads slated for closure into trails.

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Janine Clayton, USFS

- Close, stabilize and seed road beds to allow for future harvests, and avoid decommissioning.
- Ensure public safety by stabilizing and maintaining road beds that can be re-opened for rescues, fire fighting, and emergency evacuation routes when necessary.
- Focus on creating and maintaining road loops to ensure ingress and egress for public safety.
- Reduce costs to the agency by focusing on enhancing partnerships with groups that can assist with road and trail maintenance. Consider a close look at the National Environmental Policy Act process in order to begin implementing new exclusions or broad Environmental Assessments for maintenance and repair projects on existing properties and trailheads.
- Consider conversion of Maintenance Level 3 and Maintenance Level 4 roads into Maintenance Level 2 roads for those areas that are not major thoroughfares through the forest.
- Ensure access under the Americans with Disabilities Act by designating roads and trails for off-road vehicle access.

Thank you for taking my comment on this issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

Cc: Kent Connaughton, Regional Forester
US Forest Service