

October 22, 2014

To: Lisa Northrop, Forest Supervisor, Mt. Hood National Forest

Mt. Hood National Forest is a regional treasure. Not only does it provide drinking water for over a million Oregonians, but it is also a much loved recreation destination. Over two million people visit the forest each year, contributing over \$50 million to the communities that surround the mountain. But this region's love of Mt. Hood National Forest goes much deeper than the services it provides. The wild beauty of the peak, lush forests of the foothills, wild salmon runs that still find their way home, these are the heart and soul of this land; you are entrusted with their care.

*We, the undersigned, ask that you shift the focus of land management in Mt. Hood National Forest from logging to watershed health, wildlife habitat and recreation.*

One of the most damaging activities in the Forest is silent and subtle: the vast network of crumbling roads slowly leaking sediment into streams. While Forest Service roads help us get to our favorite places in the forest, many of the approximately 3,000 miles of roads in Mt. Hood National Forest are unnecessary, and in poor condition due to drastic declines in the road maintenance budget. Between 1989 and 2003, the budget for annual road maintenance in Mt. Hood National Forest declined approximately 60%. Over the last decade, the road maintenance budget has continued to decline steadily by 2% to 5% each year; now the Forest Service has a backlog of \$51.8 million in deferred road maintenance.

With this baseline of disintegrating roads, it simply doesn't make sense to waste money rebuilding old logging roads. In the Jazz Timber Sale alone, the Forest Service spent \$229,000 rebuilding previously decommissioned logging roads. Most other timber sales planned in Mt. Hood National Forest also undo watershed restoration efforts by rebuilding decommissioned roads.

Instead, we advocate that the Forest Service invest in fixing neglected roads that lead to campgrounds and trailheads, repairing trails forest-wide, and removing – instead of maintaining – unneeded, ecologically harmful roads. These investments will benefit local communities by providing jobs as diverse as heavy equipment operators, restaurateurs, and those in the recreation industry, as well as benefitting the many different species that rely on clean water.

This shift in priorities reflects changes in the economy and demographic of local communities. Today, the outdoor recreation industry employs more than 140,000 people in Oregon, while logging and wood-products manufacturing provides fewer than 30,000 jobs. Creative solutions, such as road-to-trail conversions, have long-term positive impacts for recreation visitors and the economy and ecology of Mt. Hood National Forest.

We understand that Mt. Hood National Forest has many competing pressures and is bound, in part, by the budget allocations set by Congress and higher level offices in the agency. We also understand that changing priorities requires many allies working together to create long lasting policy change. We are those allies.

To demonstrate this shift in priorities, we ask that you: 1) substantially invest in your recreation infrastructure; 2) significantly involve the public to create a Travel Analysis Process that right-sizes the Forest Service road system; 3) commit to increase road decommissioning efforts to improve watershed health and wildlife habitat; and, 4) do not rebuild decommissioned roads.

Sincerely,

**Arctos School of Herbal and Botanical Studies**

*Gradey Proctor and Missy Rohs, Directors*  
Portland, OR

**Audubon Society of Portland**

*Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director*  
Portland, OR

**Balance Media**

*Trip Jennings, Director*  
Portland, OR

**Bark**

*Alex P. Brown, Director*  
Mt. Hood region, OR

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Portland, OR

**BiPartisan Café**

*Hobie Bender, Owner*  
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**Business Catual**

*Joshua Force, Owner*  
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**Cascadia Education Project**

*Jeffrey Mocniak, Board President*  
Portland, OR

**Cascadia Law PC**

*Erin Madden, Attorney*  
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**Center for Biological Diversity**

*Noah Greenwald, Endangered Species Director*  
Portland, OR

**Center for Biological Diversity**

*Randi Spivak, Public Lands Program Director*  
Washington, D.C.

**Cherry Sprout Produce**

*Katie Nichols, Co-owner*  
Portland, OR

**Christy Slovacek Music Studio**

*Christy Slovacek, Owner*  
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**Columbia Riverkeeper**

*Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director*  
Hood River, OR

**Discover Bicycles**

*Kurt Buddendeck, Owner*  
Hood River, OR

**Devil's Club**

*Kim Hack, Co-founder*  
Portland, OR

**Environmental Paper & Print**

*Allen King, Owner*  
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**First Unitarian Church**

*Rev. Kate Lore, Social Justice Minister*  
Portland, OR

**Flying Onion Farm**

*Mark Bassik, Farmer*  
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Portland, OR

**Friends of the Columbia River Gorge**

*Michael Lang, Conservation Director*  
Portland, OR

**Gifford Pinchot Task Force**

*Gordy Molitor, Interim Executive Director*  
Vancouver, WA

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*Rhea Wolf, Owner*  
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**Western Environmental Law Center**

*Susan Jane Brown, Wildlands Program Director*  
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**Wildearth Guardians**

*Marlies Wierenga, Pacific Northwest Conservation Manager*  
Portland, OR

**Wraptitude Restaurant**

*Hidee & Ryan Cummings, Owners*  
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*Brenda Taylor, Owner*  
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