



Our mission is to connect people to the natural world and cultivate a community of environmental stewards working together to build a greener and healthier planet through advocacy, action, and education.

March 14, 2022

Holly Jewkes, Deschutes Forest Supervisor  
63095 Deschutes Market Rd.  
Bend, OR 97701

Re: West Bend Project

Dear Ms. Jewkes,

I'm writing to express concerns over some of the practices currently under contract for the West Bend Project near Phil's Trail on the Deschutes National Forest.

We were recently informed of large diameter trees being removed as part of the forest restoration effort at the West Bend Project. These trees have been shown to exceed 20 inches DBH, the size of tree identified as primary carbon sinks in mature forests. Although Jean Nelson-Dean, the public affairs officer, stated the trees do not demonstrate old-growth characteristics, she failed to state that there is no single widely accepted definition of an old growth ponderosa. Most studies reference mature trees as anything over 10 inches DBH, but old growth forests are defined by a suite of characteristics that contribute to functional ecology and habitat qualities.

On-going research continues to document the critical importance large diameter trees have on carbon uptake and storage (over 20 inch DBH). Large diameter trees uptake and store carbon at rates that exceed carbon released through transpiration and soil respiration. Retaining mature trees is essential to addressing long-term state-wide and national climate change goals identified through Executive Order and Forest Service policy.

Additionally, large trees are more resistant to fire. Mature ponderosa are well adapted to fire through the growth of a thick bark that resists low and mid intensity fires. This physiological adaptation is an important part of fire-resistant communities – a trait that doesn't exist in young ponderosa. Removing young trees, decreasing density and increasing spatial distribution of large mature ponderosa emulates the historic forest structure that existed prior to fire suppression activities beginning in the mid 1800's, and will result in a more fire tolerant system in the urban-interface. However, removing large trees will simply reduce the forest's resistance to fire, and limit the ability of the forest to recover after wildfire. And the current activities will result in a forest structure that is a net source of CO<sub>2</sub>, without regard to the best available science or recent goals and policy from the Washington Office or the Executive Branch.

I know the NEPA has been completed for this project and that it is currently under contract. But allowing the project to continue without considering new and eminently critical information on forest ecology, climate change issues, and forest management goals is irresponsible and reckless. Please revisit the project and make changes to protect mature ponderosa in the West Bend Project. Doing so is what defines Collaborative Planning, and will reflect well on your leadership and the Deschutes National Forest. Thank you.

*Richard Martinson, PhD*  
*Executive Director, Worthy Garden Club*

Worthy Garden Club is a 501(c)3 non-profit located at Worthy Brewing: 495 NE Bellevue Drive. Bend, OR 97701  
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