

My name is Dylan Plummer and I am a community activist and environmental policy expert. I am also an elected union leader, serving on the Executive Committee of a national union representing hundreds of workers across the country. I have lived in Oregon for most of my life, and have spent the past six years field surveying proposed timber sales on federal lands managed under the Northwest Forest Plan area in both a volunteer and professional capacity, ground-truthing claims made in NEPA documents, submitting written comments, and organizing protests to advocate against irresponsible projects that impacted old growth and mature forest ecosystems.

I am writing to voice my strong support for an amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan that will strengthen protections for mature and old growth forests and the species that depend on them. Specifically, I support the following key approaches in order to ensure our forests and communities are able to thrive:

- Establish a permanent ban on the logging of mature and old growth forests on federal lands;
- Retain key provisions in existing Northwest Forest Plan;
- Prioritize carbon sequestration and storage and climate resilience;
- Respect Indigenous sovereignty and increase tribal engagement in management;
- Equitably local economies away from logging; and
- Reevaluate aggressive fire suppression strategies and pivot to ecological fire management.

Climate

We are in a climate crisis, and in order to prevent warming above 1.5 C, which scientists predict would set off unpredictable feedback loops and be catastrophic to society as we know it, we must not only transition away from fossil fuels, but protect and expand natural carbon sinks such as forests and grasslands.

Thankfully, here in the Northwest we have a huge opportunity to help the global effort to keep us from climate chaos: our forests. The carbon-rich, temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest are invaluable in the global effort to fight against the climate crisis, while simultaneously ensuring the resilience of our communities in the face of climate-driven wildfire, extreme heat and drought.

According to research by Dr. Beverly Law at Oregon State University, logging is the number one source of emissions in the state, and one of the highest sources of emissions in the region. Dr. Law's other work has shown that Oregon's mature and old growth temperate rainforests are some of the most effective at sequestering and storing atmospheric carbon in the world, in some cases even more effective than the Amazon rainforest. A study by Dr. Chris Dunn at Oregon State University demonstrated that timber plantations burn hotter and faster than the native forests that they are grown to replace after industrial logging. Logging fire resilient forests like these actively puts our communities at greater risk of wildfire, like the Holiday Farm Fire which leveled towns along the McKenzie river and burned right through industrial timber land.

As if this wasn't enough, millions of Oregonians get their drinking water from rivers and streams originating in Oregon's forests. In fact, over 75% of Oregon's municipal water supplies are sourced from forested watersheds. Countless studies have shown the impacts that logging has on the quality and

quantity of drinking water supplies, and as we experience drought with increasing frequency, continuing to impact our limited drinking water resources is inexcusable.

Jobs

As a union leader, I know firsthand the importance of creating stable, family wage jobs. Sadly, as the timber industry has been consolidated by Wall St. venture capitalists, and automated away thousands of jobs over the last thirty years, the timber economy has collapsed, leaving thousands of working people behind. Thankfully, our forests can offer economic salvation for these communities without sacrificing the ecological benefits that they offer through greater investments in ecotourism and recreation, helping to allow visitors from around the world to enjoy the majesty of old growth forests, while creating thriving and sustainable industry to benefit rural communities.

Conclusion

In my experience surveying timber sales, I have spent thousands of hours deep in federal forest land, and have seen first hand the impacts of the current management paradigm. Exploring proposed sales has made it clear the shortcomings of the NW Forest Plan as it currently exists, with public lands timber sale planners maximizing harvest and often targeting intact mature and old growth forests to meet board foot quotas. As our climate changes, and imperiled species face an ever-growing list of threats to their survival, we need amendments to the plan that will allow our federal land management agencies to rise to this historic moment, and chart a course forward for these invaluable, irreplaceable ecosystems.

I encourage the Forest Service to pursue a forward-looking ecological approach in line with the climate emergency that we find ourselves in. By retaining and strengthening the core components of the Northwest Forest Plan, protecting old-growth and mature forests from logging, increasing suitable spotted owl habitat, maximizing carbon storage, and emphasizing tribal inclusion and leadership, this amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan can bolster the life-supporting ecosystems that human and natural communities rely on, and allow our carbon-rich forests play a central role in the fight against the climate crisis.

Best,

Dylan Plummer