



County of Del Norte
Board of Supervisors
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March 11, 2025

USDA Forest Service – Pacific Northwest Region
Northwest Forest Plan Amendment Project
1220 SW 3rd Ave
Portland, OR 97204

Re: Comments on the Northwest Forest Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

To Whom It May Concern,

The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) Amendment and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). As a rural county with extensive federal land holdings, the policies set forth in the NFP have a significant impact on our local economy, natural resources, and public land management. We respectfully submit the following comments based on the County's 2025 Legislative Platform and our priorities in agriculture, environment, economic development, and infrastructure.

Economic and Infrastructure Considerations

Del Norte County supports responsible forest management that ensures sustainable economic opportunities while maintaining the health of our forests. Specifically, we:

- Advocate for policies that facilitate active forest management, including thinning, timber harvest, and biomass utilization, to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risks.
- Support efforts to streamline permitting for responsible timber operations that contribute to our local economy while ensuring environmental protections.
- Encourage the inclusion of infrastructure development and maintenance in forest planning efforts, particularly in support of transportation networks such as roads critical to timber and recreation industries.
- Express concern that Alternative C, which limits timber harvesting in favor of passive restoration, would negatively impact our local economy by reducing forest industry employment. We support elements of Alternative D, which promote active management and predictability in timber supply, aligning with our Legislative Platform's emphasis on economic development and workforce stability.

Natural Resource Management and Fire Prevention

Del Norte County has a vested interest in the sustainable management of public lands to prevent catastrophic wildfires and protect our communities. In line with our Legislative Platform, we:

- Strongly support increased fuel reduction projects, including mechanical thinning, prescribed burning, and strategic firebreaks.
- Advocate for additional investment in post-fire recovery efforts and watershed restoration following major wildfire events.
- Support policies that balance conservation with active land management to promote resilient landscapes and mitigate the risks of wildfires, which pose significant threats to public health, safety, and property.
- Note that Alternative B aligns well with our fire prevention goals by prioritizing wildfire risk reduction near communities and treating 150,000 additional acres per decade beyond current levels. Alternative D's even more aggressive approach to wildfire resilience (4.95 million acres treated per decade) would provide enhanced protection for Del Norte County's communities and infrastructure.

Federal Land Management and Local Coordination

As a county with a significant portion of federally owned lands, we emphasize the importance of local government involvement in public land management decisions. We:

- Urge the Forest Service to enhance collaboration with local governments and stakeholders in decision-making processes that impact county land use and economic development.
- Request recognition of Del Norte County's No Net Loss policy, ensuring that any additional federal land acquisitions do not negatively impact the local tax base.
- Support coordinated land use planning that aligns with the County's economic development and housing goals, ensuring federal land policies do not inhibit responsible growth and resource utilization.
- Express concern over Alternative C, which significantly reduces active management, potentially limiting economic opportunities for local communities reliant on timber revenues. We support Alternative B and D for their emphasis on ensuring sustainable timber supply and economic viability.

Recreation and Tourism

Outdoor recreation and tourism are key drivers of Del Norte County's economy. To support these industries, we:

- Advocate for policies that expand and enhance recreational opportunities within the Six Rivers National Forest and the Smith River National Recreation Area.
- Encourage the development of additional multi-use trail systems, off-highway vehicle

- (OHV) access, and campground facilities to promote tourism and outdoor activities.
- Support the establishment of clear guidelines that allow for increased recreational access while maintaining environmental protections.
- Request that the Forest Service ensure that recreation access is not unduly restricted under Alternative C, which favors conservation without clear provisions for enhancing tourism infrastructure. Alternative B and D offer better pathways for balancing conservation with recreational development.

Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Del Norte County acknowledges the importance of addressing climate change through sustainable forest management. We:

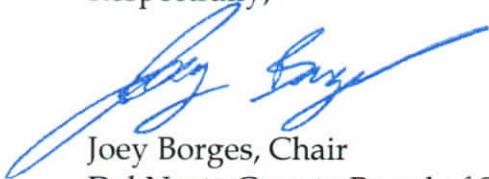
- Support initiatives that increase carbon sequestration through improved forest health and active reforestation.
- Encourage research and adaptive management practices that enhance forest resilience in the face of changing climate conditions.
- Recognize that Alternative B offers a structured approach to climate adaptation, but we urge the Forest Service to ensure that local economic impacts are considered in these plans.

Conclusion

We appreciate the efforts of the USDA Forest Service in updating the Northwest Forest Plan and acknowledge the importance of balancing conservation with sustainable land use. Del Norte County urges the Forest Service to incorporate local government perspectives, economic development needs, and fire prevention priorities into the final amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan. We welcome continued dialogue and partnership to ensure federal land policies support the well-being and prosperity of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to working together to develop policies that reflect both environmental stewardship and economic resilience.

Respectfully,



Joey Borges, Chair
Del Norte County Board of Supervisors

CC: Honorable Alex Padilla, Member of United States Senate
Honorable Adam Schiff, Member of United States Senate
Honorable Jared Huffman, Member of United States House of Representatives