

Jennifer Abernathy
La Pine, OR 97739

Dear Regional Forester Eric Watrud,

We are concerned about the future of the Blue Mountains and want to see it protected and stewarded for future generations. The plan management plan revision as currently proposed would cause long-term damage to these special places. The Blue Mountains are one of the last expansive connected areas in America to remain intact and wild. This forest plan revision provides an opportunity to protect and conserve the Blue Mountains, and unfortunately, the current proposed revision continues to prioritize extraction over conservation.

The Blue Mountains hold immeasurable value ecologically, economically, and culturally. The Blues are a unique connectivity corridor supporting the vital migration of large mammals, fish, and birds. Outdoor recreation and jobs have sustained and supported our cities and towns, which also rely on the mountains for crucial storage and retention of clean water. Indigenous peoples have stewarded the Blue Mountains since time immemorial. The plan must support Tribal consultation, treaty rights, sovereignty, and Indigenous-led conservation.

The current revision eliminates the Roadless Area and enforceable fish and wildlife habitat protections. Ignoring the science and decades of community input that created these protections leaves our wild places and our communities in the hands of the highest bidder. We urge Forest Service leadership to protect the Blue Mountains from the privatization of our public lands, the elimination of conservation protections, and the removal of the public's voice from decisions about the future of our shared landscapes. The protection of the Blue Mountains is our legacy for future generations; they deserve clean water, clean air, and wildlife supported by a healthy climate.

The Blue Mountains are a biodiverse region that has thrived as a source of wildlife habitat, clean water for local communities, and recreation. The Blues provide vital habitats that support the movements of large mammals, migratory fish, and birds -- elk, moose, sockeye salmon, golden eagles. These mountains and forests also provide clean water to Oregon and Washington communities. Outdoor recreation and jobs have sustained and supported our cities and towns. We need to create a plan that centers Indigenous leaders and scientists in this region who have spent years protecting and envisioning a sustainable future for the Blues. The plan must support Tribal consultation, treaty rights, sovereignty, and Indigenous-led conservation.

The current revision eliminates enforceable standards for protecting fish and wildlife habitat. Roadless Area protections are also eliminated in this plan, threatening our water and creating opportunity for more environmental harm.

For decades, the Blue Mountains have been fragmented by road-building and management that threatens their functionality as a region-wide connector. The Blue Mountains contain many types of ecosystems: arid and wet, grassland and forest, important riparian areas and climate refugia. Significant wildlife migratory routes pass through the ecoregion as well.

We urge you to reconsider this revision and protect the Blue Mountains.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Abernathy