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Organization:

Title:

Comments: January 29, 2024

Laura Schweitzer, Acting Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region
1220 SW 3rd Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

RE: Northwest Forest Plan

Dear Ms. Schweitzer:

I am writing on behalf of the Confederated Tribe of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians ("CTCLUSI" or "Tribes") to express our interest in the recently-announced Northwest Forest Plan ("NWFP") revisions and to request that the U.S. Forest Service ("USFS") include CTCLUSI as a cooperating agency in the development of these revisions.

The Tribe's Ancestral Territory encompasses some 1.6 million acres of what is now the south-central Oregon coast. Today, much of this land falls within the Siuslaw National Forest and is managed under the framework of the Northwest Forest Plan. The Tribe is very interested in collaborating with the Siuslaw National Forest to return Indigenous stewardship approaches to these lands and, towards that end, we expect to execute a Co-Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding with the Siuslaw National Forest in the coming weeks.

The desire of both the USFS and CTCLUSI to partner on stewardship of forestlands within the Tribe's Ancestral Territory highlights the need for significant changes to the NWFP. The NWFP is now 30 years old and was developed at a time when the USFS did not place emphasis on collaborating with Tribal partners. The zoning approach contained within the NWFP, where mapped areas are placed into either reserves or into areas managed with an emphasis on timber production, is not aligned with the Tribe's Indigenous Knowledge pertaining to the stewardship of these lands. In addition, prescriptive components within the NWFP - such as those limiting opening sizes and preventing selective harvest within stands over 80 years of age - do not provide the management flexibility necessary for an adaptive approach to stewardship that provides for diversity and resiliency across the landscape.

Tribal participation as a cooperating agency will ensure that the Tribe has a meaningful voice in the development of the new NWFP. We hope that revisions to the NWFP can help to address these shortcomings, while providing a management framework that is more conducive to Tribal involvement.

Please coordinate directly with our Director of Forest Management, Colin Beck, as you work with the Tribe on these amendments. Mr. Beck can assist in coordinating communications with Tribal Council as the need arises.

Respectfully,

Brad Kneaper

Chair, Tribal Council
Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians