

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/2/2024 5:00:00 AM

First name: Andrew

Last name: Simrin

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Drew Simrin, and I have lived and worked in the Southern Willamette Valley for my entire life. When I'm not working, I'm likely to be found in the forest, hiking the many forested mountains, swimming in streams, or soaking in a hot spring marveling at the remaining old growth in the northwest. I like to spend my time and money in our federal forest service managed forests over private, state or BLM managed forest specifically because of the way that the USFS manages them, but many improvements are needed.

I volunteer my time to "field check" many proposed timber sales on federally managed land such as the BLM and USFS managed land because I know how important land management is to the health and economics of a region such as the northwest. In all seasons I have checked several proposed timber sales and proposed actions and I see and read how the old growth forest is impacted on the ground.

I often browse satellite and topographical imagery and am amazed to see over time the land management practices here in the northwest impact our forests, water, wildlife, and land. When I look at how the 1994 forest plan has impacted forests with satellite imagery here locally, it gives me hope that we can, and should strengthen our land management practices to preserve and enhance our old growth. We need to acknowledge that logging remains a major threat to old growth forests and trees. USFS and BLM are well positioned to ease the impacts of this unacknowledged threat.

Remove the Tongass old-growth logging exemption from any further analysis in the upcoming EIS. Any financial incentive to log old trees on the Tongass conflicts with the conservation directive in EO 14072 and the global biodiversity and carbon importance of the Tongass NF that is currently transitioning out of old-growth logging.

Myself and my community get our drinking water from the forest and I am concerned with the state of the watershed. When I go swimming frequently in the McKenzie River in the Willamette National forest, the temperature of the water has been steadily rising, impacting the mortality and reproduction of protected salmonids. Old growth forests provide superior clean, cool water to help salmon and people thrive.

We need to allow more of the forest to mature to become old growth, in addition to preserving existing old growth (per the 2022 Executive Order to prioritize protection of old growth) would provide climate and wildfire resilience for communities. We must cease logging in mature and old growth forests. Include full protection of mature forests from logging, not just old-growth forests, and recognize mature forests as vital components of future old-growth ecosystems. For the Administration's proposal to be truly meaningful, mature forests must not be excluded from protections. The Administration's current proposal leaves out mature forests, which is tantamount to excluding the entire eastern half of the nation, since very little old-growth forest remains in the eastern U.S., due to logging.

Allowing the trees to sequester and store more carbon will help with lowering atmospheric carbon that is causing the worst of the climate crisis we are in. By allowing the forest to have more old growth and mature characteristics we can improve and preserve biodiversity of all life, all while protecting water quality and the other benefits that a mature forest affords.

ATTACHMENT: OldGrowth Rulemaking Comment.pdf - Comments copy/pasted to text box; coded/completed.