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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Andrew 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 here 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 Northwest forest plan impacts and affects the changes on the ground. I get to experience a unique and lived perspective by going into areas proposed with actions such as very remote timber sales that most of the public will never see with their own eyes. Aside from loggers, the places I field check are not typically seen by the public because of the remoteness, the steepness, and the downed wood/etc that a natural forest ecosystem has.

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 with satellite imagery here locally, it gives me hope that we can, and should strengthen our land management practices with this amendment process.

Myself and my community get our drinking water from the forest and I am concerned with the state of the watersheds in the northwest broadly. 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. The salmon are an extremely important part of the local economy and culture here in the Willamette/McKenzie valley, that deserves more respect and protection than what they are currently receiving to protect them from extinction. We need to be severely limiting logging in riparian reserves to create clear and enforceable limits for logging. Key watersheds should receive enhanced protection for biodiversity, ecological functions, and clean water.

Strengthening the Northwest forest plan 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. This is a great opportunity to seek inclusion from tribal and indigenous communities, with regard to cultural burning, co-management, and other management practices.

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 mature forests afford.

Please enhance and preserve our forests for old growth and mature characteristics.

Thank you.