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Comments: Please accept the attached document - a statement signed by over 1,000 people from local communities and across America calling for greater conservation efforts and a fairer, more equitable, and broader process of public engagement as part of this most recent effort to revise the Blue Mountains Forest Plans.

This aligns with the need to change the plan to better protect the values for which the Blue Mountains are known and which the region is most uniquely able to support: irreplaceable fish & wildlife habitat; sources of clean, cold, and abundant water; continued storage of carbon from the atmosphere; and important non-consumptive cultural values. The attached statement outlines these values and notes the best way to achieve these goals and a durable plan is with strong, enforceable, and defensible guidelines that emphasize among other things:

\* PROTECTION of undeveloped lands and habitat for all native species, including those that are common, rare, and extirpated, as well as connectivity corridors at all scales,

\* PROTECTION of waterways, waters, wetlands, and associated habitat from headwaters and tributaries to ocean-going rivers,

\* PROTECTION of large, mature, and old-growth trees and forests,

\* REDUCTION OF DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES such as commercial logging, overgrazing, fire suppression far from communities, and an over-roaded landscape.

Text from Agreement attachment without the list of signors (see PDF for list):

Below is a list of 1,148 people from 47 states and provinces who signed on their agreement with the following statement as of November 7, 2024:

The landscapes of the Blue Mountains Ecoregion are of global importance in our fight against climate change and the biodiversity crisis. They provide irreplaceable wildlife habitat, sources of clean, cold, and abundant water, and store massive amounts of carbon from the atmosphere.

In this age of climate change, a biodiversity crisis, and increasing development, scientists tell us that to maintain the resilience of biodiversity and ecosystems at the global scale, we must conserve 30% to 50% of Earth's ecosystems, especially large intact areas. The Blue Mountains provide irreplaceable wildlife habitat, refugia, and

connectivity corridors. The assemblage of native fish, wildlife, and plants is fragile but remains largely intact.

The forests of the Blue Mountains are the sources of abundant, clean, cold water. Conserving remaining intact watersheds is crucial to safeguard water security and slow the intertwined climate and biodiversity crisis. Protecting forests is an essential strategy in the fight against climate change because forests capture and store massive amounts of carbon from the atmosphere.

These landscapes have provided cultural values to humans since time immemorial. To the extent they belong to anyone, our public lands belong to all of us. Equally. As the US Forest Service continues to revise forest plans that will guide the management of these landscapes for decades to come, we call upon the agency and elected officials to ensure:

- [bull] A FAIR AND EQUITABLE PROCESS with everyone on equal footing, including tribes, conservationists, and those who value our forests for more than economic reasons,

- [bull] PROTECTION of undeveloped lands and habitat for all native species, including those that are common, rare, and extirpated, as well as connectivity corridors at all scales,

- [bull] PROTECTION of waterways, waters, wetlands, and associated habitat from headwaters and tributaries to ocean-going rivers,

- [bull] PROTECTION of large, mature, and old-growth trees and forests,

- [bull] REDUCTION OF DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES such as commercial logging, overgrazing, fire suppression far from communities, and an over-roaded landscape,

- [bull] INCREASED ENFORCEMENT of laws, including poaching, illegal tree cutting, grazing violations, and off-road travel,

- [bull] INCREASED FOCUS AND INVESTMENT in activities that benefit local communities and forests that do not compromise the above values, such as traditional recreation, non-commercial thinning, carbon sequestration and storage, fire use, road reductions, first foods, stream restoration, and natural processes,

- [bull]and CLEAR SIDEBORDS AND ENFORCABLE RULES & STANDARDS to ensure all of the above.