

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/17/2025 4:00:00 AM

First name: Julie

Last name: Gibson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: March 15, 2025

Re: Northwest Forest Plan amendment #64745

Dear Regional Foresters Buchanan and Eberlien:

I am a 50-year Oregon resident, biologist, avid outdoorswoman, lover of native habitat, and a concerned citizen since I discovered conservation at around age 12. I have walked up and down the Pacific Northwest forests, mountains, deserts, and meadows— as a hiker, camper, backpacker, plant surveyor, mother, and grandmother.

As you know, we are experiencing a dangerously changing climate, with potential for much worse. We've made small strides, but not enough. We must be cautious, and not practice business as usual, in light of the possible emergencies we now face. If we amend plans by weakening protections that affect all of the Northwest (and really, the country and the world), we weaken ourselves. And many look to us as an example.

I would like to focus my comments on the following:

- * There is no doubt in my mind that whittling away at the Northwest Forest Plan would be a grave mistake. It is my impression that this is a pretty good plan that needs some pretty good strengthening, not the reverse.

- * In particular, we must not cut or compromise mature and old-growth forest, including "reserves." As we have very little remaining of these towering champions and associated complex forest ecosystems, which are so vital right now for regulating water, climate, and biological diversity (much of it microscopic or minute, but powerful), I find it a mistake to propose cutting 120-year-old trees, whereas the original plan called for cutting no trees over 80 years. It takes hundreds of years to grow an old-growth forest. I urge the Forest Service not to undermine the NWFP, in protection and recruitment of mature and old growth forest, at all.

- * For this critical reason, I would select no action, with the exception of welcoming engagement with tribal communities, or a new alternative that enhances these qualities.

- * Logging can heavily impact the forest and its hydrology, from road building, heavy machinery and compaction, pollution, noise, sediment, etc. And then there are invasive weeds, and those weed seeds will stick to the machinery and spread. If the weeds are sprayed, there is yet another poison that is (to put it mildly) detrimental to the native flora and fauna. So, please say no to expanding logging over what is in the original NWFP, and yes to carefully analyzing cumulative impacts.

Healthy, moist western forests (especially old forests) are generally resilient when attacked by fire, insects, and disease; but cut them down and we lose much of the forest, the shade, the water, the balance, and the diversity of life that depended on them, which was also a key to their being resilient. We certainly must not cut them in the name of fire protection, since natural, moist westside forests are inherently resistant to fire. Prescribed ground fire might be used when wildfire protection is deemed necessary or advisable?

Old-growth forests, including their soil, snags, and fallen logs, store many times more carbon than do second- and third-growth forests. They are invaluable today, as our climate veers toward possible disasters. In their

gargantuan trunks and roots, deep soil, and towering canopies, these champions also hold onto water and release it slowly down the mountains to the valleys and cities below. Old-growth forests slow water; slow winds; cool the air; stabilize, fertilize, and make soil—deep, moist soil; and these very stable forests are filled with countless forms of living things that evolved with them into a system of checks and balances. They are also quiet and beautiful, and vital for the human spirit, as are natural areas of any kind.

We owe it to present and future humankind, to protect the myriad of natural resources that give us dependable and enjoyable life on earth. Stable old forests are one of those things, along with the sun and the properties of water, that make our lives possible and agreeable.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate, and for your stewardship of our treasured public lands.

Sincerely,

ATTACHMENT-LETTER TEXT: Northwest Forest Plan amendment 64745_comment.docx; This is the same content that is coded in text box; it was originally included as an attachment