

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

First name: Madeline

Last name: Cowen

Organization: Cascadia Wildlands

Title: Grassroots Organizer

Comments: Please find the attached letter with 1,260 individual sign-ons.

March 17, 2025

Regional Forester Jacqueline Buchanan

Pacific Northwest Region

U.S. Forest Service

1220 SW 3rd Avenue

Portland, OR 97204

Regional Forester Jennifer Eberlien

Pacific Southwest Region

U.S. Forest Service

1323 Club Drive

Vallejo, CA 94592

Submitted online via <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=64745>

Re: Tribal Inclusion in the Northwest Forest Plan

Dear Regional Foresters Buchanan and Eberlien,

The 17 national forests in Oregon, Washington, and California that are included in the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) are integral parts of the ancestral homelands of over 80 federally recognized Tribes and several other Indigenous communities. For many millennia, Indigenous peoples nurtured the land with time-tested stewardship practices that sustained their communities with abundant resources and resilient ecosystems based on a rich diversity of habitats and species. The forced removal and genocide of Indigenous peoples and the criminalization of their stewardship practices had dire social and ecological impacts including devastating physical and mental health issues particularly in Tribal communities, loss of resilience to wildfire events and climate change, a decline of landscape and biological diversity, and numerous other adverse impacts that threaten long-term sustainability across the region.

Thirty years ago when the NWFP was created, the Forest Service failed to meaningfully engage Tribes, and Indigenous Knowledge, values and perspectives were excluded from the final analysis. The agency now seeks to

amend the NWFP, and this represents a crucial opportunity to make amends for this foundational flaw in the original NWFP, and make meaningful commitments to respect Tribal sovereignty, honor treaty rights, fulfill trust responsibilities, and facilitate co-stewardship.

The agency's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) contains wide-ranging plan components to advance Tribal inclusion in national forest management. These were derived from the NWFP Federal Advisory Committee's (FAC) consensus recommendations, input gathered from roundtables with Tribes, public scoping letters, and participation of Tribal staff on the Draft EIS writing team. While this effort is unprecedented in a Forest Service NEPA process, and the Draft EIS represents a remarkable improvement compared to the development of the original NWFP, the current proposed amendment can and should be improved in response to public comments, especially from Tribal entities.

The issues analyzed within the scope of the amendment process (e.g. fire resistance, climate change, forest stewardship, and community sustainability) are all critically important and will require significant changes in management direction. The inclusion and centralization of Tribal leadership and Indigenous Knowledge in national forest management is undoubtedly profound and goes well beyond undoing past wrongs. Implementing Tribal plan components provides direct solutions to many of the significant issues presented in the DEIS, and coupled with strong public support, it is imperative for the USFS to carry out Tribal inclusion in the Final EIS and Record of Decision.

We, the undersigned, call for the Forest Service to advance all of the Tribal inclusion components presented in each of the action alternatives in the Draft EIS, and urge the agency to revise and further expand the Tribal Inclusion section in the Final EIS. The agency needs to provide a more comprehensive analysis that reflects the breadth and importance of the proposed plan components to Indigenous communities, and more accurately discloses the impacts of the proposed amendment on Tribes. The agency needs to utilize the groundbreaking work of the FAC and other Tribal engagement to produce an improved FEIS and amended NWFP that centers Indigenous Knowledge and collaborates with Tribes in forest management policies, programs, and practices in perpetuity.

Sincerely,

ATTACHMENT-LETTER TEXT: [Final] Tribal Inclusion - Individual Letter Petition 3.17.25.pdf; This is the same content that is coded in text box; it was originally included as an attachment, and it includes 1,260 names/signors and contact information.