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Title:

Comments: Dear Regional Foresters Jacqueline Buchanan and Jennifer Eberlien,

Please accept this comment as part of the scoping period for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan amendment.

I am a Portland resident. I was raised visiting the forests of the region and care deeply about their wellbeing and the benefits that they provide to wildlife, the climate, and our communities.

The Northwest Forest Plan was instrumental in protecting much of the remaining old-growth forests in our region, ensuring that these places can continue to function as habitat for endangered species and other plants and animals associated with these forests. But not all of the remaining old-growth was protected. Amendments to the plan must protect the remaining old-growth forests and trees outside of reserves and work to grow, expand, and connect these vital ecosystems.

Since the time of colonization an almost unimaginable amount has been lost from these lands and forests. There is so little left that can even resemble an illusion of what once was. The further loss of old growth and mature forests is unacceptable.

Since time immemorial, fire has had a critical role across the northwest and will continue to shape these landscapes and ecosystems into the future. Amendments to the plan need to recognize the important role of fire and work to shift policy away from full suppression of all fires. Amendments should prioritize protecting communities, while also recognizing that during extreme weather events, the effectiveness of "fuels treatments" is dramatically reduced.

Amendments should bolster efforts to reintroduce beneficial fire to dry forest ecosystems while prohibiting "fuels treatments" that aren't grounded in the current and growing understanding of fire and its role in the variety of forest types across the Northwest Forest Plan area.

Efforts should be made to help the public come to a more complex understanding of fire on the land, its role in these ecosystems, and the history, policies, and messaging that has led us to where we are at. Wisdom and direction around the utilization of fire in ecosystem management and restoration should be taken from experts in the field, including the Indigenous Peoples of this region and those individuals that continue to keep those practices alive.

To expand upon that necessity, the Northwest Forest Plan does not include the traditional ecological knowledge held within the varied and diverse tribes that are indigenous to the region - something the original authors of the plan openly regret. The ancestors of these tribes shaped and stewarded the landscapes and ecosystems now managed by the Forest Service and the Northwest Forest Plan. Incorporating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and goals into the proposed amendment is essential - especially (but not limited to) the beneficial use of fire.

Climate change caused by a reliance on fossil fuels is projected to bring about a wide range of impacts to northwest forests and our understanding of the natural processes which shape these ecosystems. Amendments must recognize the incredible carbon capture and storage potential of northwest forests - especially forests of the western cascade and coastal ranges of Washington and Oregon.

Forest issues are climate issues and should decisions should be made in this light. Climate change is an

existential threat. It is imperative that we imbue action on climate into every level of our planning.

There are countless communities scattered across our region whose identities, cultures, and economies are linked to the forests managed under the Northwest Forest Plan. Amendments to the plan must recognize the social and economic changes that have occurred in the 30 years since the plan's creation and strive to build a workforce based on restoration and reciprocity.

We can and must imagine radically different forest-based economies than we have created in the preceding centuries. I implore you conjure, use, and draw upon visionary ideas about how we create value from our forests. So much is possible. The Northwest Forest Plan has been a vehicle for pushing land management forward in the past, and it should be stewarded into this role once again.

I am optimistic that this planning process can be one that engenders hope and excitement for what is to come. What is possible will only be limited by what we can imagine can be created. It is your job to tend to that. I implore you to foster a process that can create an environment that grows new ways of being, rather than stifling this chance for repair and keeping us tied up in old patterns that we know full well to be harmful.

Thank you for your work and consideration,
Ryan