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Comments: Please accept this comment about the US Forest Service's proposed priorities for changing the Northwest Forest Plan. We value our National Forests for clean water, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and sustainable recreation that they provide and hope that management can conserve these values into the future.

As you make changes, I urge to you to highlight the crucial role of forests in conserving our region's biodiversity as well as our drinking water! Rivers and water are central to the vitality of our ecosystems.

Safe-guarding connections between wildlife habitat across the region should also be a core principle of your forest plan revision. While the proposed priorities highlight the important biodiversity of old-growth forests, we urge the USFS to ensure that biodiversity from other unique and vulnerable ecosystems, such as the unique serpentine fens and Jeffrey Pine savannas of the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest, is also considered as a goal.

President Biden's 2022 Executive Order on forests and the climate gave the Forest Service clear guidance to prioritize the protection and restoration of mature and old-growth forests (trees generally over 80 years old) as a natural carbon and climate solution. The proposed amendments should follow this guidance and protect all mature and old-growth trees and forests, which beyond their habitat values can play an important role in sequestering carbon.

To support sustainable economies of local communities, the Forest Service should look beyond only timber and recognize the role of forests in supporting sustainable sport and commercial fisheries and also sustainable recreation.

Thank you for considering our priorities.

Deb Buitron

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