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First name: Leah

Last name: Bendlin

Organization:

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.

My name is Leah Bendlin and I care about protecting northwest forests for their beauty, old growth, biodiversity, recreation, and carbon storage for the health of this planet.

Amendments to the northwest forest plan must protect the remaining old-growth forests and trees outside of reserves and work to grow, expand, and connect these vital ecosystems. Every old growth tree should be protected from logging. These are precious interconnected ecosystems of life that cannot recover simply through regrowth, as many of the associated fungi and other organisms can be lost through logging.

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 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. Such treatments have in the past only served as excuses to log for profit.

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. Indigenous groups should have the first say in how to sustainably manage the forest.

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. We must also appreciate the forest for its ability to protect us from other extreme weather events such as flooding. This includes protection and encouragement of wetlands, minimizing new road development, not logging on slopes and prioritizing old growth over logging profit.

I recognize that this is a key opportunity to right the wrongs of the former forest plan. We can go forward with a plan that is more just to the Indigenous people, more ecologically healthy and sustainable, and rooted in respect for the continuation of life on earth rather than continued destruction for the sake of profit.

Sincerely,

Leah Bendlin