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Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the revision of the Northwest Forest Plan, NWFP, which was initiated some 30 years ago in response to the threats faced by many endangered species. Now we face the crisis of climate change which requires the USFS to act in ways that will help mitigate climate change and thus improve biodiversity, water resources and wildfire resilience.

I ask that the USFS practice climate smart forestry throughout the Pacific Northwest region, which we define as forestry that optimizes carbon sequestration, storage and resiliency, protects all mature and old growth trees, and maintains a diversity of species, ages, and structures. We know that by far the most important natural climate solution is to simply grow trees longer. Our science now tells us that our older northwest forests hold more carbon on a per acre basis than any other forests in the world. Unfortunately, due to unsustainable levels of logging prior to the NWFP very little old growth is left.

The USFS needs to create the conditions to enable mature forests to become old growth forests over time. We can greatly increase the amount of carbon stored on the landscape by simply letting trees grow longer so that rather than only 10% of Oregon's forest in old growth we will have the extent of old growth prior to major commercial logging - 75% or greater.

I want to comment on another major threat that has changed significantly over the past 30 years: wildfires. We will not be able to address the problem through commercial logging. Wildfires are a natural part of our ecology here in the northwest. As a result of climate change our forests are drier in the summers, we have reduced snow-packs, longer fire seasons and more human-caused fires. Different management approaches are needed on the drier east side forests, e.g. non-commercial thinning, leaving the largest trees, more prescribed burns, than on west side forests, which mostly need to be left alone.

I urge the USFS to dedicate a much greater extent of our forests as carbon reserves. In that way we will be doing our part to help mitigate the climate crisis while also achieving other important goals including promoting biodiversity, ensuring safe drinking water, and providing expansive recreation opportunities.

Sincerely,

Ben Mendenhall