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First name: Justina

Last name: Cotter

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.

I am a frequent visitor to Mt Hood National Forest. I've done innumerable hikes, enjoying the amazing views, reveling in the beautiful and amazing forest ecosystems, and foraging for forest products such as mushrooms and berries. Beyond recreation, I recognize that these ecosystems provide important functionality for the planet and its inhabitants that it has taken us far too long to appreciate, from carbon sequestration to clean water to habitat for innumerable species that are interdependent on each other for survival.

The existing 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. It is unfortunate that 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.

Ecologically, fire has always 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.

Even though fire brings risk - including damage to communities, loss of life, and devastated regional forests that impact livelihoods associated with timber harvest as well as recreation - we have to recognize that we have a bias for near-term preservation. The cost of this bias is visible in the larger fires that have raged across the West in recent decades and that have much longer recovery periods.

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.

These forests cannot simply be considered as a cash crop, or as a recreational destination, or even just as an ecosystem providing life to innumerable regional species. On a planetary scale, their value is greater than all of these things, acting as lungs for the planet.

In addition to sequestering carbon, forests also sequester water. The more we can do to facilitate these functions, the better off we will all be. Maintaining healthy forest in the context of fire, bringing back beaver to decrease runoff and create niches for other species, and eliminating unnatural barriers such as excess logging roads that affect water runoff are some ways that we can help the forests and ourselves.

Finally, 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.

Amendments must also include the traditional ecological knowledge held within the varied and diverse tribal communities that are indigenous to the region - an omission that 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.

Thank you for your attention.