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Comments: Thank you for accepting my public comment on the plan to update/amend the Northwest Forest Plan.

I have a ranch in Douglas County. On the ground I see changes in vegetation, bird migration, tree death to beetle infestation and succumbing to drought and lack of water. The heat is higher and more prolonged. Our public lands policy must do everything possible to protect the canopy, protect the water sequestration in downed woody material, protect every species' habitat, protect against soil disturbance. The plan must utilize the forests' ability to sequester carbon. I have seen how much more difficult it is for the forest to make a comeback with native species when even a few trees are removed. Invasive species move in quickly and out compete with native vegetation.

During the snow storm of 2019 I lost a lot of fir trees as well as oaks. I had a logger come in take out the downed trees. And then came the beetles and took out a bunch more fir, not just grand but also Douglas. The snow storms, extreme wind storms, ice storms and excessive periods of heat domes and drought are due to climate change. Climate chaos is exactly what is happening. Unstable weather patterns are demanding that we respond with as little destruction to the forests as possible so that when these destructive forces do happen, the forest is already more intact and has a better chance of recuperating. I cannot over-stress the importance of adopting a stronger policy of protection along with a non-commodification of our forests. Forty years is a very long time in human terms, and yet it is at 40 when a tree finally becomes able to sequester substantial amounts of carbon. It is also when a forest of 40 or 50 year old trees can begin to become a functioning forest habitat.

Fire risk should be conducted on buildings. Entering LSR's or Matrix where there are healthy mature and old growth trees growing, in order to execute an Integrated Vegetation Management program for fire risk prevention is not the strategy to adopt. Old growth forests are more resilient to wild fires. We should start recognizing that our forests provide an important climate stabilizing component and water quality value that supersede the lumber or wood products that are gleaned from them. They are critical to our well being. They may be absolutely necessary to our survival. Your Northwest Forest Plan Amendment should provide the strongest level of protection for mature and old growth forests - not just trees, but the forests they dwell amongst.

Again, thank you,

Susan Applegate