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Comments: I am writing to comment on the proposed Northwest forest plan amendment. I am a physician in Portland, Oregon. I moved from Utah to Oregon in 2017 for my residency and now work at OHSU providing healthcare to Oregonians and others. One of the main reasons I was glad to leave and have not returned to Utah is the tenuous future livability Salt Lake City (<https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2023/03/30/neel-patel-why-i-cant-move-back/>). I fell in love with the forests of Oregon and want to see the forest service respect the forest land for its value as habitat, a source of clean water, and a carbon sink.

I commend you for through this process and acknowledging climate change adaptation, conservation of old growth ecosystems. However I believe there could be more included to avoid loop holes and strengthen protections. Specifically:

- The plan should include biodiversity and connecting wildlife habitat as a core principle. We are in a biodiversity crisis and preservation of wild spaces and ecosystems have many tangible and intangible benefits. As a radiologist, I read CTs of cancer patients, before, during, and after treatment. Many of those patients are treated with Paclitaxel, which was initially developed from the pacific Yew tree, a native Northwest tree that had little value for timber and was once considered a weed. Healthy, thriving ecosystems may hold more treatments that we don't know about yet.
- The plan should recognize the social and economic benefits of National Forests beyond just timber production, as the Paclitaxel anecdote shows. The forests have value for outdoor recreation, clean water, and quality of life of local communities. Personally, hiking and biking in national forest lands brings me joy and comfort. As a radiologist I see devastating diagnoses every day, including cancer, severe trauma, and surgery complications. Enjoying healthy forest ecosystems helps me stay grounded and recharge so I can continue my work the next week. I tend to recreate in national forest land (Gifford Pinchot and Mt Hood national forest) because it is more enjoyable to be there than the state owned and more heavily logged forests of the coast range. I can see and feel the difference.
- The plan should protect ALL mature and old growth trees and forests. The NWFP governs an enormous carbon reserve and the current conservation has turned the lands managed by the forest service into a carbon sink from a carbon source due to logging.
- Improved and more nuanced "fire resistance" strategy. A century of fire suppression and a warming climate has made fire more complicated. Fire adaptation and resilience should focus on home ignition zone and non commercial treatments and use of beneficial fires. I fear that the vague language could allow industrial logging and removal of the biggest (and most fire resistant) trees in the name of "fuel reduction."

Thank you for your consideration and your work in the Forest Service.

-Neel Patel, MD