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Comments:

Write a Public Comment on the US Forest Service's Proposed Updates to the Northwest Forest Plan

Use this guide to submit a comment by 8:59 PM PT, Friday, February 2, 2024

OVERVIEW:

Use this toolkit to submit a comment on the US Forest Service's draft updates to the Northwest Forest Plan.

Submit a comment by 8:59 PM PT, Friday, February 2, 2024! See talking points below.

WHAT IS THE NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN?

For nearly 30 years the Northwest Forest Plan has directed management in National Forests in western Washington, Oregon, and northern California. A compromise enacted in 1994, the NWFP aimed to protect and restore old-growth forest and healthy stream habitat for threatened species, while still providing for timber harvest on public lands.

NOW: the Forest Service is considering a set of changes to the forest plan, and asking for public comments to guide these changes.

WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR IN FOREST PLAN UPDATES?

While much has changed in the past few decades, there remains a need for strong direction to protect forests for water, wildlife, carbon, wildfire resilience, and old forest protection and restoration.

STEPS TO SUBMIT PUBLIC COMMENT - BY FEB 2 AT 8:59PM

Dear Forest Service,

Coming from a family who counted on income from our forests, I feel strongly they should be protected - i.e. no clear cutting. Management is important, and we should all participate in decision makings and Maintenance. Any one cutting should be required to clear brush and waste, and plant trees to replace those logged.

Thank you for accepting this scoping comment regarding the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). The forests of the NWFP region are vital to our region, providing cold, clean water for people, fish, and wildlife, inspiring places for contemplation and recreation, older forests that are home to rare species, climate change mitigation, and job opportunities.

In amending the NWFP, it is crucial that we ensure that these life-supporting ecosystem benefits continue on in our national forests, and that they remain a natural solution to climate change by absorbing and storing carbon in their leaves, branches, trunks and roots. Here are key considerations for any changes to the NFP:

First, the amendment must protect and conserve mature and old-growth trees and forests in both moist and seasonally dry forests. While the NWFP reserved many older forests in 1994, it failed to protect them all, leading

to controversy among stakeholders. Thus, the NWFP amendment must sustain and foster older forests and trees into the future. To achieve this, the plan should bring an end to commercial logging on National Forest lands within its jurisdiction.

Second, the amendment must recognize and address the effects of climate change. The Forest Service should reassess current wildfire management strategies in light of escalating wildfire activity. Wildfire management activities such as thinning and fuels reduction should only be focused in and around home sites and communities.

Additionally, the Forest Service should consider incorporating Indigenous cultural burning practices and Wildland Fire Use as available fire management tools. In general, consultation with local Tribal Nations and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge will be critical steps for the Forest Service to take in amending the Northwest Forest Plan.

Third, conservation of the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and native salmonids was a cornerstone of the 1994 NFP, and an amendment should enhance protections for at-risk fish and wildlife. The NFP amendment should bolster efforts to recover wildlife, recognizing the ongoing threat of climate change and past management practices. To protect biodiversity in the era of climate change, the amendment must ensure that natural processes are maintained.

Finally, the amendment should recognize shifts in our region's socioeconomic landscape since 1994. While forest management in some form will always be a part of the Pacific Northwest economy, recreation and other pursuits now draw more people to our region than ever before. Building a modern forest workforce focused on ecological restoration of riparian and planted areas for the benefit of wildlife, fish, water, and biodiversity will contribute to ecological resilience of our National Forests and ensure continued public enjoyment of these lands we all value.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Forest Service's proposed climate-smart amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan.