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Comments: Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Northwest Forest Plan Amendment #64745. Here are my thoughts:

My hope is that the Plan amendment will protect and conserve old-growth as well as mature trees and forests in both wetter and drier forests, such in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. In addition to protecting existing old forests, the update should recognize the need to restore older forests across the landscape, and adequately protect mature trees and forests which are poised to become old-growth forests in our lifetime.

The Plan amendment should recognize and address the effects of climate change, particularly the increase in very large and severe wildfires. While the NFP considers the essential role that wildfire plays in our forests, the size and severity of wildfires has far exceeded expectations. The Forest Service should prioritize ecologically-based forest restoration and reduce activities which significantly increase fire risk (e.g. increasing slash post-harvest, overcutting, etc). The use of careful thinning and prescribed burning is also an important strategy in light of these escalating wildfire threats. I hope the agency will consider increasing its use of managed and prescribed fire to restore healthier forest conditions and consider incorporating Indigenous cultural burning practices.

It is my understanding that conservation of the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and native salmonids was a cornerstone of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994, and I hope this amendment will maintain and enhance protections for at-risk fish and wildlife. To protect biodiversity in the era of climate change, the amendment should ensure habitat resilience from disturbances such as wildfire, drought, disease, and insects.

And lastly, I hope the amendment will recognize shifts in our region's socioeconomic landscape since 1994. Commercial timber production will probably always be a part of the Pacific Northwest economy, but the number of mills and the capacity of the timber industry has changed drastically since 1994. Given the large amount of restoration work needed, this is an important time for the agencies to contribute to the building of a strong, rural forest restoration workforce. Please consider developing policies and mechanisms that allow local, skilled contractors to successfully bid on and carry out these needed restoration projects. Such an approach will not only contribute to ecological resilience of our National Forests but also provide high-paying jobs in nearby rural communities that are invested in the health of these lands.

Thank you for your consideration.