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First name: Heather

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Jacqueline Buchanan, US Forest Service, Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest Region

RE: Comments on the Revision of the Northwest Forest Plan

Please accept this comment as part of the scoping period for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan amendment.

My name is Heather Nelson. I am an Oregon resident, environmental planner, and someone who loves to hike in the wood and values that experience for the wellness of people of all backgrounds. I care deeply about our planet and have made major life changes to reduce my own carbon footprint. I'm also engaged in efforts to increase the use of native plants to increase habitat and decrease needed inputs. I started my career in watershed protection, management advocacy and planning, and, 35 years later, I still work to protect water quality and native landscapes.

It does take all of us doing our part but the changes need to happen on a larger scale. Climate change is the greatest threat to the survival of our species and others. Protecting mature trees, forests and old growth here in the PNW is the best strategy to draw carbon out of the atmosphere and store it while protecting our drinking water, watersheds, plants and wildlife.

I have grown to love the forests of the PNW as a source of inspiration, awe, hope and life. We know that they can take up and store more carbon than any forest in the world. That is why I would like to see a major commitment on your part to preserve our forests through the new NW Forest Plan.

The new plan must incorporate President Biden's challenge to protect 30 percent of mature and old growth forests by 2030. Our nation is a signatory to the IPCC which calls for forest protection as a major solution in reducing climate change, so we need to show good faith to the rest of the world by following through with our commitments.

Oregon does not have much old growth left. That means that the plan must make old growth off limits for logging, even after fires. Roadless areas must be off limits to loggers too, because they cause erosion, degrade water quality and impact riparian and in-stream habitat. Selective thinning of our Western forests doesn't make sense because they're wet and not prone to the same kind of devastating fires that we've seen elsewhere.

I'm also concerned about our water and biodiversity. We know that forested watersheds produce cleaner and larger volumes of water without flooding. We know that preserving biodiversity and connected wildlife habitat across the region creates more ecological stability. That's why the new plan needs to include protections for threatened species and those pending for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

In addition, because BLM forests have been removed from the Forest Plan's regional reserve system, any amendment to the plan must have clear and enforceable limits on logging and road impacts. The amendment must have clearly protected, connected, and redundant reserves by including all mature and old-growth forests and core wildlife areas without roads.

The Northwest Forest Plan continues to be instrumental in keeping Oregon a special place through the restoration of forests and watersheds damaged by past logging and road building, recovery of economically valuable salmon runs, protection of wildlife habitat and old-growth forests, and ensuring our National Forests are part of a natural climate solution.

Thank you sincerely for working to preserve our precious old growth for this and future generations.