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Comments: COMMENT LETTER: NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

Thank you for accepting this comment regarding the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan. The Forest Service should take advantage of this opportunity to improve the management of our federal lands to support our communities, wildlife, environment and economy.

Active management, including routine timber harvest and thinning of overstocked stands, supports the health and resilience of forests of all ages. It also supports wildlife habitat and the need for forest products that support our communities. Yet only 16 percent of national forest lands in the Pacific Northwest are available for routine timber management (Matrix).

In its Amendment, the Forest Service should expand opportunities for active management across all artificial land designations, such as Matrix or Late Successional Reserves to support forest and community health.

Currently, the Forest Service is limited in its ability after a wildfire to remove dead and dying trees, as well as hazard trees along forest roads. The Forest Service should prioritize quick action after a fire to ensure safe access on public lands for firefighters, first responders and the public at large.

I am a California Registered Professional Forester that has worked in and around our National Forests since 1976. It is heartbreaking to witness the result of the past hands off approach on our National Forests lands and the subsequent rapid increase of extreme wildfire in our National Forests. We are losing millions of acres of public lands that include mid-successional and old growth forest, as a result of this lack of forest management. One hundred years ago we took fire out of these ecosystems through fire suppression; we are now faced with forests that are extremely overstocked with fuels. As recent evidence has shown, when we do not manage the vegetation in these forest stands they are converted by stand replacing wildfire.

Active management also maximizes the ability of forests to sequester and store carbon. Unfortunately, severe wildfires are emitting massive amounts of carbon and contributing to losses of mature and old growth stands.

The Forest Service should promote the development of forests of all age classes, especially younger forests that sequester carbon at high rates. Through responsible timber harvest, carbon can also be stored in long-lived wood products that are made right here in the region.

Finally, the Northwest Forest Plan promised to include the "human and economic dimensions in management." Yet the plan has failed to deliver adequate timber supplies that many rural communities depend on for jobs, economic opportunity and revenues to support public services.

The Forest Service should honor the promise of the Northwest Forest Plan by providing reliable and predictable timber supply to support our region's forest sector, which also helps federal agencies achieve their conservation goals through wildfire mitigation, wildlife habitat enhancement and other benefits.