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Comments: I support the following Audubon Society points regarding the proposed Northwest Forest Plan Amendment #64745:

Any Northwest Forest Plan amendment must prioritize preserving biodiversity and habitat connectivity. This includes strengthening protections for Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, and the many other at-risk fish and wildlife species impacted by habitat fragmentation and loss. Preserving biodiversity in the face of climate change also means ensuring habitat resilience from the impacts of wildfire, drought, disease, and insects. Through Executive Order 14072, President Biden gave the Forest Service clear guidance to conserve and restore mature and old-growth forests as a natural climate solution. The Northwest Forest Plan covers 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in western Oregon and Washington, and northwestern California. Any amendment to the Plan must recognize and protect the ability of these forests to sequester and store vast amounts of carbon.

The plan amendment should protect and replenish all mature and old-growth trees and forests. Although the Plan protected many older forests, it did not protect them all. The Plan left a million acres of mature and old-growth forest open for logging.

In considering amendments to address sustainable communities, the Forest Service must recognize the multitude of social and economic benefits that forests provide to local communities - including clean water and air, climate resilience, and recreation.

The size and severity of wildfires has increased in recent years, requiring the Forest Service to reassess current management strategies. In doing so - and as part of broader and better consultation with Tribes - the Forest Service should consider incorporating Indigenous cultural burning practices.

It is essential that we prioritize environmental concerns at this time of extraordinary climate Impacts & biodiversity collapse. Thank you.