

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/2/2024 4:22:47 AM

First name: Michael

Last name: Sherman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Re: Comments on NWFP Amendment #64745

Hello, and please accept this comment as a call to action and urge to think deeply and fully during the process of re-writing the Northwest Forest Plan.

I have personally grown up and started my life living along the banks of the Upper McKenzie River in Oregon, surrounded by the Willamette National Forest. This has given me a great appreciation and connection to our National Forests and how our communities and intertwined with them.

After graduating from McKenzie High School, I started working for the Forest Service during the summers as a wildland firefighter for the next 4 summers. This experience has completely changed my view and understanding of our wild landscapes and how they are also intertwined and reliant on fire to be healthy and thrive.

It was a monumental task to write the Northwest Forest Plan the first time, creating a roadmap for our natural landscapes and how to manage them on the landscape/ecosystem scale. From my understanding, this was one of the first times a task like this has been undertaken. In the past 3 decades, we have learned so much more about how our ecosystems are all intertwined and reliant on each other. There is still so much unknown about the future we are heading towards, but our forests will be a huge factor in creating a sustainable future.

Having grown up in Oregon, I have seen the seasons change right before my eyes over the years. I have experienced the fire seasons and storms becoming more extreme over the years, and it's only going to keep getting more volatile. If we want any hope of having healthy forests into the future and for the next generations, we need to create a North West Forest Plan that puts creating healthy forests first.

Having a healthy fire on the landscape is at the center of everything. In the past 100-plus years, our colonial way of thinking has not created a healthy relationship with fire on our landscape. I beg you to put indigenous voices and knowledge which have been excluded and silenced for so long at the center of this conversation seeking to return healthy fire to the landscape.

Our forest practices have not allowed fire to return to the land and I dearly hope we can keep working in this direction. Industrial forestry practices have created an environment that is not compatible with fire. Young trees are not resilient to fire. I urge you to end logging in mature and old-growth forests and to focus on the forests that have been regrown to unhealthy levels and are not compatible with fire. There is so much work to be done in these young forests that we need to start there.

The challenges of a warming climate will only keep getting worse and the longer we wait to start making positive changes to the mountain of work ahead of us, the more buried we will get. We can't continue with the status quo, which is why I believe you all are re-writing this plan. Please create a forest plan that centers the best current and future science we have available to create fire-resilient forests(which are mature and old-growth forests) along with centering ingenious voices and knowledge who have been doing this for longer than we can comprehend.