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Comments: To: Jacqueline Buchanan, USFS, Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest Region:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the revision of the Northwest Forest Plan. We own a small forested property in Yamhill County, and in our rural area we have seen the effects of climate change on trees, other plants and wildlife. Years of drought and extreme weather have taken a toll on the biodiversity of our area, which has been home to species of bear, wild cats, deer, numerous birds and more. We have seen a decrease in birds and insect life, particularly, as well as native white oak. The fear of wildfire has increased greatly here, too, especially since the widespread fires in 2020. As we and others we know struggle with the expense of increasing forest health and fire safety, it seems only right that the USFS act in ways that will help mitigate climate change and thus improve biodiversity, water resources and wildfire resilience

We ask that the USFS practice climate smart forestry throughout the Pacific Northwest region, meaning forestry that optimizes carbon sequestration, storage and resiliency, protects all mature and old growth trees, and maintains a diversity of species, ages, and structures. The most important natural climate solution is to grow trees longer; our older northwest forests hold more carbon on a per acre basis than any other forests in the world. Unfortunately, due to unsustainable levels of logging prior to the NWFP very little old growth is left. Therefore, the USFS needs to create conditions enabling mature forests to become old growth forests over time. In this way, the amount of carbon stored on the landscape can be increased so that rather than only 10% of Oregon's forest being old growth, we will have the extent of old growth prior to major commercial logging - 75% or greater.

As we mentioned earlier, the threat of wildfires has become increasingly worrisome in our heavily forested area; it's a threat that has grown over the past 30 years. This problem can't be solved through commercial logging - wildfires are a natural part of the ecology here in the northwest, and should be treated as such. And as a result of climate change our forests are drier in summer, snow-packs are reduced, and fire seasons are longer. Different management approaches are needed, shaped by the circumstances in different regions. Wetter western forests can be mostly be left alone, while drier forests in eastern and southern Oregon can be managed more through non-commercial thinning, leaving larger trees standing and using more prescribed burns.

I urge the USFS to give greater priority to using our forests as carbon reserves, in order to help mitigate the climate crisis while also achieving other important goals like preserving biodiversity, safe drinking water and recreational opportunities.

Sincerely,

Tim Storey & Shauna McKain-Storey