Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/3/2024 1:06:24 AM
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Comments: Dear Forest Service,

Thanks for this opportunity to comment on the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). The NWFP forest regions are vital to our region, providing cold, clean water for people, fish, and wildlife, places for contemplation and recreation, older forests, rare species, climate change mitigation, and job opportunities.

It is crucial to ensure that these life-supporting ecosystem benefits continue on in our national forests, and that they remain a natural solution to climate change by absorbing and storing carbon in their leaves, branches, trunks and roots. Here are key considerations for any changes to the NFP:

First, the amendment must protect and conserve mature and old-growth trees and forests in both moist and seasonally dry forests. While the NWFP reserved many older forests in 1994, it failed to protect them all. The NWFP amendment must sustain and foster older forests and trees into the future.

Second, the amendment must recognize and address the effects of climate change. The Forest Service should reassess current wildfire management strategies in light of escalating wildfire activity. Wildfire management activities such as thinning and fuels reduction should only be focused in and around home sites and communities.
Additionally, the Forest Service should consider incorporating Indigenous cultural burning practices and Wildland Fire Use as available fire management tools. In general, consultation with local Tribal Nations and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge will be critical steps for the Forest Service to take in amending the Northwest Forest Plan.

Third, conservation of the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and native salmonids was a cornerstone of the 1994 NFP, and an amendment should enhance protections for at-risk fish and wildlife. The NFP amendment should bolster efforts to recover wildlife, recognizing the ongoing threat of climate change and past management practices. To protect biodiversity in the era of climate change, the amendment must ensure that natural processes are maintained.

Finally, the amendment should recognize shifts in our region's socioeconomic landscape since 1994. While forest management in some form will always be a part of the Pacific Northwest economy, recreation and other pursuits now draw more people to our region than ever before. Building a modern forest workforce focused on ecological restoration of riparian and planted areas for the benefit of wildlife, fish, water, and biodiversity will contribute to ecological resilience of our National Forests and ensure continued public enjoyment of these lands we all value.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Forest Service's proposed climate-smart amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan.