

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/3/2024 2:42:03 AM

First name: Patricia

Last name: Fischer

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service,

Thank you for the opportunity to present scoping comments regarding the proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan. The benefits of the plan for water quality, habitat protection for threatened and endangered species of wildlife and salmon as well as forest restoration from unsustainable logging have been gratifying but massive changes have occurred to conditions which impact our Pacific Northwest Forests both from human caused negative effects and to the science of understanding our forests and these impactful events in the 30 years since its adoption. It is time to acknowledge the different state of the environment the NWFP operates in to protect our forests and to build in the accumulated scientific knowledge needed to do so in today's conditions, threats and desired uses.

Spending my childhood shaped by living in some of the affected California forests in the 20th century and now in the 21st century having spent nearly 20 of my adult years in the Oregon forests which are affected, the importance of these changes which will affect the landscape of my childhood and my current living situation are of both emotional and practical importance to me. In my time in Oregon I have observed much of the forest land become denuded, experienced the devastating wildfires of Labor Day 2020 directly adjacent to my community as well as other well loved places in Oregon and Washington, had the great joy of recreating alone and with others in the forested habitats of these states and to learn from some of the best research on forests coming out of our universities and forest advocates. I have learned how to monitor conditions in our forests from very knowledgeable teachers who have helped me understand what I see and experience in a much more informed light than the automobile-bound tourist views of my earlier years. I'm afraid the personal peace and connection to the landscape I feel when out in our natural places and public lands is constantly disrupted by the knowledge I have of the threats to its condition.

As a result of my personal perspective, I offer the following comments:

1. Climate change mitigation and adaptation must protect and conserve all mature and old growth forests in both moist and seasonally dry forests. The 1994 NWFP failed to protect all and the mature and old growth forests' importance as a carbon sink has increased significantly, according to science, since then. We have limited time to protect them for this use as climate change threats, although man-made, do not follow human rules or timelines. Adaptation to climate change can (and must) include preservation as a strategy.

2. Addressing fire resistance is critical and must include native tribes effective cultural practices and input, take into account natural fire regimes and not take a one-size-fits-all approach to both moist and dry forests. I urge you to place the highest priority on retaining, protecting and nurturing older trees across the landscape. Please revise LSR standards to recognize that priority by thinning young trees and retaining all mature growth. The logging industry has adapted their equipment and practices to such timber so the thinning of younger trees will not impact the economy of logging. Thinning can accelerate the onset of LSR characteristics and create refugia from high-severity fire where the canopy survives and contributes live trees to the post-fire landscape mosaic. The major emphasis on such fire reduction techniques, especially in non-fire season, should be focused in and around home sites and communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface.

3. The importance of tribal inputs and respect for native cultural practices and Indigenous knowledge cannot be over emphasized. It should be threaded throughout all aspects of the plan in addressing the challenge of water quality and availability, preservation of habitat for wildlife and knowledge and practices related to the natural role of fire on the landscape.

4. Social attitudes and preferences increasingly favor nature, scenery, climate and recreation and disfavor logging, mining and grazing. Recreationists view federal forests as parklands not timberlands in increasing numbers. These sociological trends among our citizenry, the true owners of our public lands, must be taken into account as you address uses and economic benefits in your planning. The economic benefits to local communities adjacent to our PNW forests are becoming huge in terms of recreation dollars as well as restoration activity employment. Much of the revenue from timber production, as well as the product itself, leave our geographic area and are of no major benefit to our local communities. For example, a planned public lands timber sale would have impacted my local community's investment in a beautifully planned and executed area of hiking trails and separate mountain biking trails which would be of great economic benefit to a logging community no longer primarily inhabited by a population dependent on forest industries. Citizen action as well as legal action stopped the sale's execution. Following that this place's importance in the WUI where clearcuts through the mountain biking trails would have exacerbated fire danger was demonstrated when the Labor Day fires of 2020 threatened the area and forced residents to evacuate.

Under economic considerations, I urge you to remove the term "non-timber products" from forest planning and substitute specific activities focused on trees and associated plant life, perhaps using a term which excludes the extraction industries that do not involve plant life.

5. Biodiversity needs to be protected in our forests. Addressing the threats of invasive species and insects must be done realistically and not in ways that support a forest monoculture.

6. In the implementation of the final plan I urge a heavy use of standards and a minimalization of guidelines, which allow for dilution of purpose by individual discretion. We cannot afford for this plan to save our future to be watered down without any public scrutiny.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. I urge you to speak for the forest, not primarily for human economic interests, the activities of which have made this amendment process necessary, not just prudent, at this juncture.