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Organization:

Title:

Comments: [External Email]Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement

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Dear Forest Service:

Thank you for accepting this scoping comment in support of the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP). The forests of the NFP region are vital to our region, providing cold, clean water for people and wildlife, inspiring places for contemplation and recreation, older forests home to rare species, climate change mitigation, and job opportunities.

In modernizing the NFP, it is crucial that we ensure that these ecosystem services continue to flow from our national forests and that they are able to adapt to a changing climate. Here are key considerations for the 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 NFP reserved many older forests in 1994, it did not protect them all, which has led to controversy among stakeholders. Thus, the NFP amendment must sustain and replenish older trees and forests into the future.

Second, the amendment must recognize and address the effects of climate change, particularly the increase in very large and severe wildfires. While the NFP considers the essential role that wildfire plays in our forests, the size and severity of wildfires has far exceeded expectations. The amendment should reassess the conservation strategies for both moist and seasonally dry forests, considering the evolving role of wildfire and incorporating Indigenous and cultural burning practices. Consulting with regional Tribes is crucial.

Third, conservation of the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and native salmonids was a cornerstone of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, and an amendment should only maintain and 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 habitat resilience from disturbances such as wildfire, drought, disease, and insects. Preserving a single tree with a nesting hawk in the middle of a clear cut clearly follows the current rule but violates common sense and fails to achieve any long term protection of our raptors. In addition it fails to demonstrate to the logging community the value of those protections. In fact it demonstrates the exact opposite: government interference with no clear positive result. With no surrounding protective habitat the nest may be abandoned immediately or immediately after the current brood is fledged unless they are predated due to the vulnerability. This just looks foolish.

My husband and I are members of OSWA. We are surrounded by clear cut examples and we have recently performed managed logging to harden our property to fire. This is still in progress as we attempt to provide wildlife corridors, forage and cover for animals and birds fleeing nearby clear cuts. We protect a flowing creek

and a portion of a wetland. For us this is not theoretical. It involves everyday decision making

Finally, the amendment should recognize shifts in our region's socioeconomic landscape since 1994. While forest management 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 restoration workforce 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.

Sincerely,
Veronica Weeks-Basham

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