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

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Dear Forest Service:

I agree with this letter's content, below. But first, I want to clearly state that the creation and maintenance of THRIVING, BALANCED ECOSYSTEMS must be our top priority! Not economic gain, not creating human playlands, etc.

No, humans have already ruined too much of our only viable planet's bioregions, and the result is quickly leading to the collapse of our bioregional ecosystem health planetwide - which affects ALL species, including humans. So let's make the taking of responsibility for the future of Oregon's bioregional thrivability - for ALL species (not just humans - in balance, our top goal.

The steps necessary to make that a reality will change as circumstances change. So we must also develop and maintain feedback loops to let us know what actions we take actually accomplish the intended goals, and which need to be tweaked over time to ensure they produce the intended outcomes.

Thank you for listening to constituent feedback and for accepting these scoping comments 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.

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,  
Shaktari Belew

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