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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 and climate change mitigation.

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 sadly did not protect them all, which has led to controversy among stakeholders especially those who profited from the logging of old growth. 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. Using the best science, the amendment should reassess the conservation strategies for both moist and seasonally dry forests, considering the evolving role of wildfire to include considering Indigenous and cultural burning practices. Regional tribes as well as scientific experts should be consulted. Wildfire management is crucial to prevent ongoing threats to loss of human life as well as wildlife, economic loss from destroyed homes as well as public health.

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 maintain and enhance protections for all 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.. Logging will and should be an increasingly unimportant part of the Pacific Northwest economy while recreation and other pursuits now draw more people to our region than ever before. Building a modern forest protection and 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,
Mary Brown

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