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Comments: [External Email]Please update the NW Forest Plan to protect our mature and old-growth forests.

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Dear Ms. Buchanan,

I'm writing to provide scoping comments on the Forest Service's notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for an amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan. US Forest Service; Forest Plan Amendment for Planning and Management of Northwest Forests Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, 88 Fed. Reg. 87,393 (Dec. 18, 2023) (hereinafter, Northwest Forest Plan [NFP] amendment).

The Northwest Forest Plan is an unprecedented, science-based, regional ecosystem management plan to ensure the viability of fish and wildlife associated with late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest and to economically support local communities. These forest ecosystems are vital to our region, providing cold, clean water and other ecosystem services for people and wildlife, mitigation against climate change, older forests that support enormous biological diversity, inspiring places for contemplation and recreation, and job opportunities. Since its establishment in 1994, it has improved watershed conditions and reduced threats to mature and old-growth forests and the plants and animals living there, including many very rare, unique species only found in the Pacific Northwest.

However, spotted owl and marbled murrelet populations continue to decline, which contradicts the NFP's promise that maintaining habitat would maintain population levels. Clearly, the NFP miscalculated; more forest needs protection from logging.

Specifically, the amendment should:

Protect mature and old-growth stands.

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

Regards,

Robert Mitchell

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