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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:

The forests of the NFP region are vital to the region. They provide cold, clean water for people and wildlife; inspiring places for contemplation and recreation; homes to rare species; global warming mitigation; and job opportunities.

In modernizing the NFP, it is crucial that we ensure that the ecosystem services continue to flow from our national forests, and that they are able to adapt to global warming as well as possible. Key considerations for the proposed amendments to the NFP follow.

Firstly, 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 led to controversy among stakeholders. Thus, the NFP amendment must sustain and replenish older trees and forests into the future.

Secondly, the amendment must recognize and address the effects of global warming, 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. Prescribed burns and let burn policies should be considered important management tools, that incorporate Indigenous and cultural burning practices. Consulting with regional Tribes is crucial.

Thirdly, the NFP amendment should bolster efforts to recover wildlife, recognizing the ongoing threat of global warming and past management practices. 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. To protect biodiversity in the era of global warming, the amendment must ensure habitat resilience from disturbances such as wildfire, drought, disease, and insects.

Finally, the amendment should recognize shifts in the 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 the 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 the National Forest lands we all value.

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

Sincerely,  
John Nishio

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