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Comments: My name is Jude Armstrong of Hoquiam Washington. Please accept this comment on the draft EIS for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan amendment. Our forests have been getting better with age and deserve the opportunity to get even better. Let's give them that time!

Any amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan should recognize the wide variety of social and economic benefits National Forests provide for local communities and the region as a whole-not just timber, but also clean water, climate stability, quality of life, and outdoor recreation.

Fire resistance and resilience can be bolstered by preserving and restoring mature and old-growth forests. Fuels and fire management should focus on the home ignition zone and on non-commercial treatments and beneficial fire use, not commercial logging. Indigenous cultural burning and wildland fire use should be prioritized. Commercial logging for fuel reduction can negatively impact wildlife habitat, remove large fire-resistant trees, introduce invasive species, and create hazardous fire conditions. Standards must ensure that fuel reduction is both needed and effective before logging is allowed.

The Forest Service must reject plans to weaken core protections of the Northwest Forest Plan, and do the following:

- *Strengthen protections for mature and old-growth forests to ensure habitat, water quality, and carbon storage, and recruit more mature and old forests to restore a functional ecosystem.

- *Maintain or expand protections for the network of forest reserves to allow natural processes to flourish, ensure connectivity for wildlife, and support the recovery of imperiled species. Any reduction in forest reserve protections would increase harmful impacts such as habitat destruction, sediment in streams, and carbon loss, further endangering sensitive ecosystems.

- *Genuinely consult with Tribes, respect their sovereignty, and provide resources to support their full participation in decision-making. The Forest Service must support co-stewardship agreements, cultural burning practices, first food harvesting, and youth education while ensuring equitable access to planning processes. Pairing these components with the Forest Service's plan for weakened environmental protections is a false choice manufactured by the agency.

- *Address environmental justice by analyzing impacts on air, water, and communities and ensuring fair, sustainable working conditions.

- *Shift wildfire strategies to prioritize community safety and proven prevention measures over logging.

I believe we need a strong forest plan that incorporates modern science and public values, robust and honest tribal consultation, and the needs of future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

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