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First name: Deb

Last name: Lester

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Deb Lester, attached are my comments on the draft EIS for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) amendment.

The amendment to the NWFP does not recognize the wide variety of social and economic benefits that National Forests provide for local communities and the region as a whole-these forests are not just timber, but also provide clean water, climate stability, quality of life, and outdoor recreation.

Preserving and restoring old growth forests bolster fire resistance and resilience. 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 US Forest Service must reject plans to weaken core protections of the NWFP, 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.

Deb Lester