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Comments: I am writing to urge your support for strengthening the Northwest Forest Plan by increasing the protections it provides for mature and old-growth forests. The Northwest Forest Plan is an effective policy that is helping to address climate change and providing additional habitat needed to recover the threatened Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet.

Please strengthen the Northwest Forest Plan, and build upon the conservation gains made in the Pacific Northwest and northern California, by prioritizing enhanced protections for the region's mature and old-growth forests. This will benefit endangered birds, as well as the global climate.

This can be accomplished by adopting a modified version of Alternative C that provides added protection for mature forests essential to restore sufficient habitat. Increased buffers for forest management activities around Marbled Murrelet nests are also crucial to reducing nest predation, a key factor preventing population recovery.

I am concerned about language in all of the alternatives promoting increased logging of mature forests. These mature forests are essential for increasing the amount of old growth habitat and must not be sacrificed. It is imperative that new growth saplings not be exposed to fires or excessive drought that might imperil their survival.

This plan also fails to address the extinction risk facing the Northern Spotted Owl, which is suffering from a severe and rapid population decline, as well as the slower decline of the Marbled Murrelet population. It is essential the existing habitat protections of the Northwest Forest Plan be maintained and built upon, not weakened or watered down. Owls are valued predators that keep the small rodent population down. Without owls, we will lose valuable crops and new growth saplings to small herbivores.

Thank you for considering these critical issues. Please protect mature and old-growth forests to preserve biodiversity, fight climate change, and ensure the recovery of vulnerable bird species.