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Comments: Do NOT Weaken, the Northwest Forest Plan!

Mature and old-growth forests provide wildlife habitat, are sources of clean water, and mitigate the effects of climate change by pulling massive amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and trapping it deep in the soil.

The proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP)-the landmark policy that has helped safeguard the Pacific Northwest's iconic old-growth forests, clean water, and wildlife habitat for 30 years- and your planned amendment is bad for our country and our region. If enacted, these changes would double or even triple logging levels across our public forests, open mature and old-growth trees to chainsaws, and sideline the protections that communities, wildlife, and ecosystems depend on. Any profit given from such use would be negligible at best, in light of the lost economic and geographical riches that exist in these forested areas.

This is not a future we can afford. Recklessly logging these forests will exacerbate climate change, degrade habitat for imperiled species like the northern spotted owl and coho salmon, and increase wildfire risks in our communities. These things will all cost money for state and federal government agencies, protecting the forest is thus in everyone's economic interest. The proposed changes also threaten clean drinking water and beloved recreation areas across the Pacific Northwest, thus harming other assets such as tourism dollars.

It could also set a dangerous precedent for mature and old-growth forest management plans across the nation!

Any components of the NWFP amendment that weaken core protections for mature and old-growth forests and the suite of water quality, species habitat, and carbon storage values they provide should not move forward, while those components that strengthen the NWFP's commitment to Tribal sovereignty and inclusion, environmental justice, and beneficial fire use should move forward without being tied to increased logging in these vital forests.

PLEASE protect these forests and our natural resources for future generations.

Sincerely,

C. Rushing/ WA voter