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Comments: I think timber harvest should be increased on federal forests in the Pacific Northwest, particularly on the west side of the Cascade Mountains for a number of reasons.

If the main goal is for better wildfire control this would help achieve that goal. On the west side of the Cascades the historic fire return interval was supposedly 300-600 years. Wildfire is a natural and important process in Pacific Northwest forests. However, one could argue that, now due to climate change, and past management practices, this fire regime is no longer the same and the way that forests are burning is possibly different than it was in the past. Species requiring mature forest habitat for survival will likely lose much of that habitat if mature forests are burning at a different rate and in a different way. So human intervention, hopefully more nuanced than it was done historically, may be necessary to preserve some mature forests.

In addition to better wildfire control there are a number of benefits that could be derived from increased timber harvest on federal lands. The human population depends on the natural resources of this planet to meet its needs. Timber made into lumber for building materials is one of the most obvious of these, though there is a multitude of other products essential to everyday life that are derived from trees. Despite what some might say, timber is a renewable resource and it can be harvested sustainably, much more sustainably than asphalt and concrete for instance, and it is, for the most part, biodegradable.

More timber harvest activity on federal land will also probably result in fixing or reopening abandoned forest roads and better road maintenance. This would allow better access to the public to whom these lands belong. This would be especially important for those in our population who lack the time, physical ability or knowledge to access these areas on foot. For instance, why should someone who is disabled, or no longer young and fit enough to walk long distances over difficult terrain, or someone who simply doesn't have the free time for a multi-day trip, be denied access to land that, as a member of the public, belongs to them?

Finally, people who live in a given area should be able to make a livable wage from the resources that surround them. The area where I live is completely surrounded by federal forests and a national park. 2.7 million acres of this land is designated wilderness, forever protected from industry and development. The local school district is a good indicator of the local economy because it serves the residents of this area. The student body of this school district typically stands at about 80 percent qualifying for free and reduced lunches due to poverty.

The remainder of the federal land in this area that is not designated wilderness should be used, in part, to support the local economy. In addition to the good wages associated with the timber industry, the tax structure is such that taxes generated from timber harvest go to local institutions like libraries, the county and school district. Tourism, which I have often heard being put forward as an alternate to the timber industry as means of making a living, does not generate comparable wages to timber industry work for its employees. And, as was stated previously, increased timber harvest would likely increase access to public lands which would also likely produce an increase in tourism.

I can imagine that opponents of increased timber harvest on federal land will present the specter of big timber companies run amok, destroying forests in order to increase their profits and that the only alternative to this is to not cut any timber at all. The problem with this way of thinking is that it is out of date. It is a preservationist approach that might have worked in the 19th century or before, when it was developed, but is inadequate to address the problems we face in the 21st century. It ignores changing conditions on a global scale i.e. climate change influencing historic fire regimes and behavior and it ignores the fact that even our advanced civilization depends on natural resources for its continued existence and that those natural resources need to come from

somewhere on this planet.

We have more knowledge now than we did in the past about how to manage forests to maintain biodiversity while deriving the timber resources required by society. This knowledge is far from perfect or complete. It probably never will be complete because of constantly changing variables like the climate. But timber harvest doesn't need to look like it used to, in fact, it shouldn't. And I would argue that we would be more advanced in our knowledge of forest management if the preservationists of the past had put their energies toward figuring out how to obtain our resources in a sustainable way from our federal forests rather than prohibiting timber harvest there while getting all of these resources from some anonymous place or private timber lands in a manner that is detrimental to species requiring older forests.

Finally, I can imagine forest carbon sequestration being brought up as a reason not to harvest timber. I am skeptical about timber industry claims about how timber harvest and lumber manufacture sequesters carbon. I am equally skeptical about claims that the living trees in our forests are sequestering large amounts of carbon, therefore they shouldn't be cut down. No matter where the truth lies in this, it should be self-evident that if a forest burns in a manner that kills most of the trees in it, whether they are old growth or second growth, those dead trees won't be sequestering any more carbon. In fact, they will begin releasing it in the form of methane and other carbon compounds.