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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Regional Foresters Jacque Buchanan and Jennifer Eberlien,

My name is James Neu and I am a volunteer with 350.Eugene and have been recreating in the Willamette National Forest for more than ten years. I am an avid hiker, kayaker, and bicyclist and have five grandchildren that I hope will enjoy the Willamette Forest and forests of the Pacific Northwest in their lives as much as I do. This is why I am writing you to propose strengthening the Northwest Forest Plan to benefit future generations. Please accept this comment on the draft EIS for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan amendment.

The Northwest Forest Plan is instrumental in keeping the Pacific Northwest a sacred place through restoration of forests and watershed damage by irresponsible past logging and road building. Recovery of economically and ecologically valuable salmon runs, protection of wildlife habitat and old growth forests and ensuring our national forests are part of a natural climate solution. These old growth and mature trees sequester carbon reducing the impacts of climate change due to the continued burning of fossil fuels.

My concern is the proposed Forest Service amendment to the Plan weakens protections for our regional forests, clean water, and wildlife habitat. If enacted, these changes would increase logging levels across our public forests, open mature and old growth trees to clear cutting, and sideline the protections that communities, wildlife, and ecosystems depend on.

I support several elements of the amendment that include beneficial fire approach and support of Indigenous cultural burning and co - stewardship agreements. The Forest Service should retain all of the Tribal inclusion plan components that are in Alternative B, but uncouple them from the forest management components that increase the age of trees and forests that can be logged.

Preserving biodiversity and wildlife habitat across this region should be a core principle of this forest plan amendment. This should include not only threatened species, but others that have been impacted by the loss and fragmentation of their habitat and those awaiting state or federal Endangered Species Act listing decisions.

The amendment 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 Wildlands 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.

In summary, the Forest Service should reject plans to weaken core protections of the Northwest Forest Plan and strengthen protections for nature and old-growth forest to ensure habitat, water quality, and carbon storage, and recruit more mature and old forests to restore a functional ecosystem. The Plan should 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. The Plan should consult with the Tribes, respect their sovereignty, and provide resources to support their full participation in decision making. The Plan should address environmental Justice by analyzing impacts on air, water, and communities and ensuring fair and sustainable

working conditions. The Plan should 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 and allowing public comment.

James Neu
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