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Dear Forest Service leaders -

Regarding proposed changes that would cripple the protections offered by the Northwest Forest Plan, please know how deeply betrayed my outdoors-loving family and friends will feel if you allow our those national forests to be logged without concern for the destruction to wildlife habitat, to our sources of clean air and water, and to recreational solace.

While some in our current Administration see our public lands as nothing more than a piggy bank to be broken up to enrich timber executives and their shareholders, we see it differently.

For over a century, our national forests - such as our favorites: Willamette and Siuslaw, have in large part served a higher purpose, as havens for humans as well as wildlife. In these and other Pacific Northwest forests, our intact mature and old-growth trees are a global model for landscape-scale ecosystem conservation as they provide essential habitat for imperiled species like the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and coho salmon. They also filter and protect drinking water for communities across the Pacific Northwest. But their over-arching value in our eyes is as a national carbon storage bank, an unequaled bulwark against our escalating climate crisis.

As a nation we are confronting more climate emergencies than ever before. People of all ages are suffering from extreme heat, calamitous tornadoes, vicious hurricanes, WUI fires, as well as costs of injuries, damage, and loss. With our administration taking aim at FEMA, they may not be able to help anyone recover.

The Forest Service should strengthen or expand protections for forest reserves under the Northwest Forest Plan. This is the time to add more habitat, protect streams, and enhance carbon storage, allowing old trees to grow into even greater carbon-absorbing ecosystems, not reduced to boards and slash. In your role as stewards of our national public lands, you are heroes. We ask you not to let us down.