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Comments: I am respectfully submitting comments on the Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) amendment. I support the NFP's regional approach to ensure the viability of fish and wildlife in ancient forest ecosystems as well as local communities.

In recognition of climate change, I support a modified Alternative B (B+). This will help recruit old forests, burn dry forests, improve habitat connectivity, protect aquatic ecosystems and restore old forests.

Forests of the Cascades and Olympics are vital to our region, providing water quality, climate resilience, biological diversity, places to recreate, and sustainable job opportunities. Since 1994, NFP has improved watershed conditions and reduced threats to its magnificent ancient forests.

The proposed NFP amendment is a big step forward in protecting old-growth forests, restoring fire to the landscape, and improving ecological resilience of dry forests. It also direction to incorporate indigenous knowledge in decision-making and to expand co-stewardship opportunities to better address Tribal cultural needs.

However, the proposed amendment needs improvement in five key areas:

1. Promote old-growth recovery in dry forests by recruiting enough trees from the largest and oldest size class during stewardship actions to restore old-growth distribution and abundance. Older and larger trees are especially important for storing carbon, supporting biological diversity, and resisting stress from fire, drought and other disturbances.
2. Prioritize for ecological restoration of previously logged areas in wet forests, especially in 80-120-year-old stands. Old plantations with homogenous structure and composition will benefit the most from actions that enhance structural complexity.
3. Reduce road density to improve wildlife habitat connectivity and reduce aquatic impacts from climate-induced flooding. Reduce road density to 1 mile road/mile 2 in key watersheds and to 2 miles of road/mile 2 outside key watersheds and hydrologically decouple roads from water resources in all land allocations.
4. Maximize wildland fire and indigenous cultural burning to restore ecologically appropriate fire ecology in dry forests. Adopt plan components that support Tribes' co-management and co-stewardship.
5. Remove guideline 1 (b) from FORSTW-LSR-GDL for creating young forest in Late-Successional Reserves. Natural disturbances are expected to continue to create suitable amounts of complex early successional forest habitat in reserves, so this guideline is unnecessary.

Thank you for considering my comments on the US Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan.

Sincerely,

Woody Wheeler
Conservation Catalyst