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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Regional Foresters Jacque Buchanan and Jennifer Eberlien

My name is Charles Landman. Please accept this comment on the draft EIS for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan amendment.

I grew up in North Idaho and Western Montana, where my father, Leland Landman, was the Forest Engineer on the Kaniksu National Forest, and then Assistant Regional Engineer for Region 1. My dad introduced me to the forests, and I began backpacking into mountain lakes around Sandpoint when I was very young. I have been hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, picking berries and enjoying our National Forests for more than seventy years. As a young man, I worked in the woods, surveying logging roads, so I am no stranger to the economic benefits the forest can provide.

However, times have changed, and our forests have changed, and not for the better. In my lifetime, I have seen the extreme overcasting of the forests that went on in the 1980's, and the fragmentation of our forests that continues to this day. In the process, every single attribute of the forests - water, wildlife, recreation - yes, even timber - suffered.

We have had some relief from that damage with the Northwest Forest Plan, which continues to be instrumental in keeping the Pacific Northwest a special place through the restoration of forests and watersheds damaged 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.

I am concerned that the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Plan weakens protections for our region's forests, clean water, and wildlife habitat. 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.

The Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to manage the resources of the National Forests - timber, range, water, recreation, and wildlife - for multiple use and sustained yield of ALL the resources. The Act does not prioritize any single resource, yet the Forest Service has often ignored the other resources in favor of timber production. Emphasizing only logging, and to the detriment of ALL other forest resources, is clearly a violation of the Act, but more importantly, a violation of the Trust responsibility the Forest Service owes to the American people. This Trust responsibility extends to all Americans, not just those who live near the National Forests, or those who make their living or profits from the National Forests, or those in this Administration who want to reward their corporate donors. Your responsibility runs to all of the forest resources and all Americans.

I support some elements of the amendment that includes a 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 connected wildlife habitat across the region should be a core principle of this forest plan amendment. This includes not only threatened species, but others that have been impacted by the loss and fragmentation of their habitat, and those awaiting state and/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 wildland 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.

The Forest Service must reject plans to weaken core protections of the Northwest Forest Plan, and do the following:

(1) Strengthen protections for mature and old-growth forests to ensure habitat, water quality, and carbon storage, and recruit more mature and old forests to restore a functional ecosystem.

(2) 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. Any reduction in forest reserve protections would increase harmful impacts such as habitat destruction, sediment in streams, and carbon loss, further endangering sensitive ecosystems.

(3) Genuinely consult with Tribes, respect their sovereignty, and provide resources to support their full participation in decision-making. The Forest Service must support co-stewardship agreements, cultural burning practices, first food harvesting, and youth education while ensuring equitable access to planning processes. Pairing these components with the Forest Service's plan for weakened environmental protections is a false choice manufactured by the agency.

(4) Address environmental justice by analyzing impacts on air, water, and communities and ensuring fair, sustainable working conditions.

(5) 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. Times have changed: this is not your grandfather's forests, where trees were only "timber", and there was no limit to how much could be cut. We live in a different world, one that recognizes the multiple benefits our National Forests provide. We need - and the forests deserve - a plan for the modern world.

I fully understand the pressures you are under to drastically increase logging on the National Forests, to "get out the cut" as they said in the old days. You have a choice, a personal choice here, to do the right thing, to create a plan that honors all of the forest resource and all Americans, or to give in to the pressures to just cut more trees. This is a test of your character. I believe you will pass, and do what is right, for the forests, and for us all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Charles Landman
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