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Comments: Oregon's national forests play a much greater role than simply serving as a resource to be harvested and exploited for short term gains and profit. They are vital to clean water, clean air, and the health and well-being of citizens and local communities.

That's why I'm calling for the Northwest Forest Plan amendments to include stronger and more expansive protections for old-growth forests and trees, and to help enhance wildlife habitat. Any amendment to the plan should recognize and include:

-More protection for old-growth and mature forests. We must ensure our forests are resilient against wildfire and help mitigate climate change. Older trees are invaluable for carbon-storing and the fight against a changing climate and are more resilient to fire. Sadly, as a result of ineffective logging restrictions and practices, less than 10 percent of Oregon's old-growth trees now remain. I am firmly opposed to the Forest Service's attempts to increase the age limits that would allow any additional mature trees or old growth forests to be subjected to logging.

-Keeping forest reserves intact and expand them. We need more forest lands to filter and protect drinking water that our cities and state rely on. Portland and other communities would not have nearly the access to clean drinking water if it wasn't for Mt. Hood and the forests that protect the Bull Run watershed. Conversely, the logging industry is a proven polluter, using toxic herbicides that seep into our water supply and creating logging roads and clear cuts that brutalize our forests, causing landslides, stream and river degradation - all in the name of short term profits for a few wealthy timber companies. That's a terrible trade off, especially considering the severe, long-term damage to our natural resources that we all rely on.

Instead, healthy forests serve a fundamental role for our local economies which increasingly rely on tourism and outdoor recreation dollars. As opposed to logging, this is a sustainable, clean economic engine that offers a wide variety of job opportunities and supports healthy communities.

-Incorporating forest protections that are crucial to wildlife habitat, such as native fish and endangered bird species. This includes limiting logging and enforcing strict regulations to ensure any logging activity does not harm wildlife, streams, rivers, lakes, trees and the natural, biodiverse vegetation they need to survive.

As an avid outdoorsman who enjoys fishing, hiking, skiing and camping, I appreciate all that Oregon's forests and wilderness areas offers-from the coast and the Columbia Gorge, to the Wallowa and Steens mountains. That's why I urge you to make strong protections for our forests-and all the many and massive benefits they provide-as the top priority for the Northwest Forest Plan.