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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the USDA Forest Service,

I urge you to approve a final Northwest Forest Plan that prioritizes wildlife, climate and ancient forests - not logging at all costs.

As someone who has been active in forest protection for over 40 years and over 30 years since the first NWFP was put in place, I want to point out what the Plan has done beneficially and what is at stake if it is not strengthened:

The Northwest Forest Plan by halting unchecked clearcutting has protected our mature and old growth forests and dependent species like Northern Spotted Owls, Marbled Murrelets and other imperiled fish and wildlife on our federal lands throughout the Pacific Northwest. It has fostered carbon sequestration.

If either the preferred Forest Service amendment (Alternative B) or Alternative D is approved, this would increase logging levels on mature and old growth forest and ignore the Plan's original emphasis on wildlife and habitat conservation. This would also result in negative consequences for climate stability including clean air and drinkable water.

Remedy: You must do the right thing. The final Environmental Impact Statement must address the following: To protect dependent species, do not allow the logging threshold to go beyond 80 years to ensure continuing closed forest canopy and forest connectivity avoiding forest fragmentation.

Do prioritize overall Natural Climate Solutions with longer forest rotations that will leave mature and old-growth trees on the landscape and result in higher forest complexity to sequester as much carbon as possible as well as reduce fire risks.

Plan to reduce threat of wildfire to communities by treating fuels in the immediate vicinity of homes and buildings instead of overly enthusiastic thinning and clearcuts.

Acknowledge the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, clean water and fisheries from our national forests other than solely from board feet.

Advance the Tribal inclusion components independently of any of the alternatives.

As forest stewards, you must recognize in this current political climate, there is alarming indication that protective laws like the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act might be skirted to simply get out the cut. This could lead to the decimation of our National Forests.

Do everything you can to ensure a strong Northwest Forest Plan that protects the future of our remaining and old growth forests and dependent wildlife species with related environmental benefits.

In stewardship of our forests,

Lynn Herring