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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear US Forest Service,

I am 73 years old and have been a resident and farmer in Lane County, Oregon my entire life. Hunting and fishing in the Mohawk Valley was my passion for my first twelve years, during the 1950s and early 60s. Now I look back and remember the steady loss of the Big Trees.

The Weyerhaeuser log train came by our Mohawk Valley home back fence every weekday for years, with one to three logs per car most of the time; of course all that private old growth has been gone for years. The Columbus Day storm of October 12, 1962 took out much of the federal old growth trees in the Mohawk watershed and yet "we" kept increasing the cutting through the 1980s as if the supply of old growth was unlimited. It was not, and is not!

My extended family now owns a 200-acre tree farm next to our livestock and poultry farm in Oregon's Long Tom Watershed. Our family has held these farms since 1964 and we take stewardship seriously. The tree farmers, my nephews and nieces, hope for a 50-60 year harvest rotation in small sections, but it is a tree farm, not a forest, and their rotation is longer than the current industrial model. At any rate the managed tree farm is not a forest. Public Land with intact forest needs to be protected and grown from mature to old growth over time.

We have squandered the health of our native habitats, even as we know more of the value of old intact forests: for carbon sequestration, clean water, intact soils, aquatic life, fire resilience, habitat for thousands of species, and natural beauty that fosters human peace of mind. The Northwest Forest Plan recognized many of these values and sought to maintain what old growth forests we had left on public land, while giving a means of growing mature forests to old growth over time. Now, of course, private interests want to take what we of "the public" own in common, erasing that unique legacy-our entire old growth forest ecosystem!

Please retain what little bit of Northwest old growth we have left and protect the mature forest which will become old growth-if it survives natural disaster-while sequestering carbon which, if not controlled, will lead us to the ultimate disaster: an unlivable planet.

Sincerely,

Paul Atkinson