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Comments: Comments on Northwest Forest Plan Amendment #64745

I'm writing to protest the weakening of the Northwest Forest Plan through Northwest Forest Plan Amendment #64745, which will enable more logging, in general, and more logging of older stands of trees. I recommend that we log less, that we selectively log young, sustainable stands of trees, that we increase protected acreage of mature and old forests, and that we not weaken existing protections. I offer the following reasons.

Love of Pacific NW Forests

As a child growing up in Portland, OR, our family vacations and weekends were spent camping in the forests of the northwest. We had a lot of kids and really couldn't afford more expensive pursuits. We absolutely loved hiking, swimming in the lakes and rivers, cooking over a campfire, watching wildlife, and hearing the forest noises at night and looking up at the tall trees as we lie in our sleeping bags. My dad brought bird and plant guides along, and we learned to identify the various species that we encountered. Perhaps as a result of these experiences, to me there is no more beautiful, spell-binding, peaceful place than an intact, mature forest. I don't think any man-made park or entertainment has ever equalled the magic of the forest with its remarkable complexity and interconnectedness. In college, I studied biology and biogeography and learned in detail about how the forest systems complement and enable each other. And how forests provide us with many necessary services far more cheaply than man-made technology could.

Intact Forests Provide Critical Services

Timber is no longer the most critical resource that forests provide, and we should increasingly manage them accordingly. Timber harvesting should not be our number one priority. One often reads about the role of the Amazon forests in creating world climate, and how the logging of these forests is one of the important factors driving climate change world-wide.

The forests of the Pacific NW are no different! They have a critical impact on our climate. They are a huge sink for carbon, but in addition, their transpiration creates rain. They cool the streams and rivers, thus slowing and extending the season of snow melt that provides the water for Pacific NW cities and towns. This cooling promotes healthy stocks of migrating fish. The water's progress through the forests filters and cleans it so that we have pure water, e.g., from Bull Run, that needs little intervention to be drinkable. Think what it would cost to filter all our drinking water! Forests buffer us from the wind. They provide habitat for precious wild animals and plants, and protected corridors along which they can move to maintain strong gene pools and survive a warming climate.

It takes time for the structures that support these processes to develop, so older forests, in general, are better at providing these critical services.

Dependable Sustainable Livelihoods for Logging Communities

The current US Administration is telling us that we need to log more--that it is an emergency. Who believes this? We don't need more logs. We're already doing a lot of logging, judging from all the clear cuts that are visible from flights above. We need to stop exporting our logs, which disposes of them relatively cheaply. It

would be so much better to create higher end products from the logs within communities that rely on the forest for an income. Log fewer trees but generate more income from those that are logged. Some of this industry exists now, but we need more. We need stable, safe jobs for older loggers and their families. It doesn't mean that we should stop logging, but that we should log younger, sustainable stands in a careful fashion and make good, income-generating use of what we do log.

Protect the Environmental Review Process

For more than a decade, I worked as an Environmental Specialist for a Federal agency, doing environmental reviews of projects via EIS's and other documents. I can't find words to express how important it is to protect this review process. It is the first and perhaps only line of protection for our precious environment. These reviews should be done scrupulously. Corners should not be cut, e.g., by omitting protections for endangered species as amendment #64745 appears to do in some areas. The process should not be weakened because the current administration demands it. It took great effort to establish this process, and will be extremely difficult to restore if it is weakened or eliminated. I urge you to do your best to keep it strong. I know that you work very hard, and that you're in a very vulnerable position right now. There is a lot of opposition to this process by the current rapacious administration, but it is so valuable! Please fight for it!

Thank you for All You Do!

Thank you for your attention to my comments. As a person born and raised in the Pacific NW, I feel very strongly about protecting our forests. When I think of old forests being logged, their ground covers, shrubs, and invertebrates crushed by heavy equipment, their streams polluted, and the homes of wildlife destroyed, my heart aches. It brings to mind the famous photo made in the 1800's of a mountain of bison skulls, five to six times taller than a man, shot by men from a moving train, for no good purpose. I hope we have learned from this! But I fear that it is just a matter of who is in power. The forests belong to the people, not a greedy few. They are a limited, but life sustaining resource, especially in this time of radical climate change. Protecting the forests protects the critical processes that they provide, and so protects us!