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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Regional Foresters Jacque Buchanan and Jennifer Eberlien

My name is Betzi Hitz. I live in Springfield, Oregon. I left Albuquerque, New Mexico and moved to Eugene, Oregon in 2015 after reading the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In fact, I consider myself a first wave climate refugee. I did not want to stay in the high desert where summer temperatures were rising and water shortage was looming. Except for the experience of increasing summer temperatures and decreasing air quality due to wildfires, I find Oregon to be a significant improvement over New Mexico. To help keep our shared climate one conducive to life for all species, I am a member of 350 Eugene working to lower greenhouse gas emissions at the city, county, state and regional levels. I'm an avid hiker, camper and kayaker in many areas that are affected by the Northwest Forest Plan. I grow most of my own vegetables, fruit and mushrooms in my front and back yards. I am a mother and grandmother.

Please accept this comment on the EIS for the proposed Northwest Forest Plan amendment. These forests are important to me because they are among my favorite places to recreate. I especially enjoy hiking in the Willamette and Umpqua National Forests. These forests are also very important to me for the carbon sequestration they provide and for their part in promoting biodiversity via wildlife habitat and vibrant plant communities.

The Northwest Forest Plan is instrumental in keeping the Pacific Northwest a special place through restoration of forests damaged by irresponsible logging, protection of wildlife habitat and mature and old-growth forests, and ensuring our National Forests are part of the climate solution. I am concerned that the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Plan weakens protections for our region's forests and wildlife habitat. If enacted, these changes would double or triple logging of the mature and old-growth trees.

I support elements of the amendment that include a beneficial fire approach and support of Indigenous cultural burning and co-stewardship agreements. Tribal inclusion plan components in Alternative B should be retained, but they should be uncoupled from components that increase the age of trees that can be logged.

Fire resistance 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:

- *Strengthen protections for mature and old-growth forests to ensure habitat and carbon storage and recruit more mature and old forests to restore a functional ecosystem.

- *Shift wildfire strategies to prioritize community safety and proven prevention measures over logging.

We need a forest plan that incorporates modern science and tribal wisdom. We need a forest plan that supports the needs of all beings now and for many generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Betzi Hitz from Springfield, Oregon