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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I urge you to create the strongest possible protections for our indispensable mature and old-growth forests.

Thank you for having the vision to create a forest management plan. Now that plan is thirty years old and these vital habitats are at risk from rampant logging that target these oldest and most essential trees, laying aside the protections that ecosystems and communities count on.

As recent fire lookouts, my husband and I experienced noticeable changes in just a few short years. The subalpine firs around our lookout cabin turned brown from long-term drought, and the fires we used to report have turned into unmanageable infernos that drove us from our post. Formerly, we looked out on a vast span of green and vibrant trees. Now, what is seen from the same location is an interrupted landscape with too many burned, dying and disrupted trees.

Before that, in the 1980s, I lived in Detroit, Oregon and saw firsthand the results of unsustainable timber harvesting, when Willamette's timber sales outranked those of any national forest in the United States, and that of some regions. At the time, one of my friends who worked for the Forest Service was responsible for determining where the cuts would take place. She would come to my house and cry because when she applied all of the overlays to her maps (to protect streams, steep slopes, cultural resources, etc.) there was nothing legal to cut. But a legislative act required a certain level of board feet of lumber to be harvested, and she was forced to make the heartbreaking decision, time and again, to approve harvesting that was not legal in order to meet the requirements. Let's not do that again.

Our forests are not a crop. The proposed changes to the Northwest Forest Plan could triple logging across some mature and old-growth forests, such as in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie NF, the Shasta-Trinity NF, and my familiar Willamette National Forest.

While some things are difficult to control, the degree of logging in the remaining forests is not. We need to protect the remains of our forest reserves. We depend on them for clean water, for carbon storage, and as essential habitat for the imperiled species who depend on them. And those mature and old growth trees are essential. It would take hundred of years to recreate their habitat, and with forest fragmentation, climate change, and other stressors it is dubious at best that such a thing could be accomplished.

The high rate of employee turnover in the Forest Service - even before the new challenges - has created issues due to a lack of understanding of history, treaty rights, and the balancing act of multiple uses. You can make the

changes inside the Forest Service boundaries those that will enhance our public lands - or at least leave them to thrive.

Your mission statement includes the words "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests[hellip]to meet the needs of present and future generations." Don't allow the productivity part of that mission statement endanger the health and diversity elements. Please consider carefully how to craft the strongest possible protections for our indispensable forests, particularly those that are mature and over 125 years old.

Thank you for considering my comments.