

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/16/2025 4:00:00 AM

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Comments: Dear Project Official,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide public input on the amendment process for the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP).

Over the past three decades, this plan has not only safeguarded critical ecosystems but has also contributed significantly to carbon sequestration by preserving mature and old-growth forests (USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station, Watts et al. 2017). As we move forward, the only viable amendment options are those that strengthen and expand protections for these forests. Approaches such as the Late Successional Reserve designation and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy are essential tools in this effort. I support an enhanced version of Alternative B (B+), which prioritizes old forest recruitment, prescribed burns in dry forests, improved habitat connectivity, aquatic ecosystem protection, and the restoration of old forests within Reserves.

Integrating climate adaptation into forest management is more critical than ever. As climate change intensifies the risks of wildfire, drought, and extreme weather, we must ensure forest policies align across jurisdictions to mitigate these threats. However, any efforts to improve forest health and wildfire resilience must include clear safeguards to prevent ecological degradation. Active management strategies on federal lands should not override the foundational, science-driven goals of the NFP-protecting biodiversity, species habitat, and climate stability. The current language regarding expanded management should be revised to reinforce these priorities over timber production.

Additionally, Indigenous stewardship has long shaped the forests of our region and must be central to future planning. Meaningful Tribal consultation, co-management, and access to culturally significant lands should be embedded into the NFP's framework. This includes supporting traditional ecological knowledge, ensuring sustainable co-stewardship practices, and upholding Indigenous rights to subsistence hunting, gathering, and cultural access on federal lands. The plan should not only incorporate these elements but also establish mechanisms to ensure their long-term success.

Thank you for considering these perspectives as you refine the Northwest Forest Plan. I urge you to adopt a science-based, climate-conscious, and Indigenous-inclusive approach that prioritizes forest resilience for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Laura Sheehan