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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear U.S. Forest Service,

As an Oregonian with a deep and abiding connection to the natural beauty of our state, I am writing to express my strong concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the Northwest Forest Plan. I believe these amendments represent a significant step backward in our efforts to protect our invaluable forests and ensure their long-term health and resilience.

The Irreplaceable Value of Oregon's Forests:

Oregon's forests are critical for more than just timber. They provide essential ecosystem services, including clean water and air, diverse wildlife habitats, and crucial carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change. Our communities and economies rely on these forests for tourism, recreation, and overall quality of life.

Critical Concerns Regarding the Proposed Amendments:

? Weakened Old-Growth Protections and Increased Logging: The proposed amendments offer inadequate protections for mature and old-growth forests, threatening to double or triple logging levels. This will severely impact biodiversity, increase wildfire risk, impair water quality, and reduce climate resilience.

? The shift to "stand establishment dates" must be rejected, and the 80-year criterion for mature forests maintained.

? All old-growth stands, especially those never logged, must be permanently protected and exempt from thinning.

? Endangered Species and Habitat Loss: The amendments fail to provide sufficient protections for endangered species like the Marbled Murrelet and Northern Spotted Owl. We must maintain species-specific management plans and expand Late-Successional Reserves (LSRs) to create larger, connected blocks of habitat.

? The lack of progress in rebuilding populations of these keystone species is alarming, and demands more protections of mature forests.

? Central Oregon Dry Forests: Increased logging in Central Oregon's dry forests is a grave concern. This fragile ecosystem is vital for clean water, wildlife, and recreation.

? Fuel Reduction Standards: Fuel reduction efforts must be carefully evaluated to ensure they are necessary and effective, prioritizing ecological integrity.

? Broader Economic and Social Benefits: The amendments must recognize the full range of benefits provided by our forests, including clean water, climate stability, and outdoor recreation.

? Tribal Inclusion: While tribal inclusion is essential, it must be accompanied by genuine environmental protection, not used as a justification for increased logging.

? Political Interference: The long-term vision of the Northwest Forest Plan must not be compromised by short-term political or economic pressures.

Specific Recommendations:

? Adopt Option C, maintaining the 80-year criterion.

? Reject the shift to "stand establishment dates."

? Maintain species-specific management plans.

- ? Permanently protect all old-growth stands.
- ? Expand LSRs and create connected habitat corridors.
- ? Implement strict standards for fuel reduction.

Call to Action:

I urge the Forest Service to reconsider these amendments and prioritize the long-term health of our forests. We must strengthen, not weaken, protections for mature and old-growth forests, endangered species, and the overall ecological integrity of our region.

Thank you for your attention to these critical concerns.

Sincerely,

Dacia Stockton