

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/17/2025 4:00:00 AM

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Comments: I urge the USFS to use this opportunity to amend the Northwest Forest Plan to be in service to the forests and to the people and animals that rely on them. Although I did not grow up in Washington, I have now lived here for over a decade - my entire adult life. Throughout this time, I have gotten the opportunity to explore a fraction of the beautiful forests of my adopted state, though I've only scratched the surface. Through hiking, backpacking, birding, snowshoeing, and other recreational activities, the forests of the Northwest have provided me refuge, quiet, connection to nature and to others experiencing nature with me, and an appreciation for the natural world that has been particularly necessary for my physical and mental health in a post-covid world.

Not all forests are created equal. Old-growth forests, and mature forests that have the potential to become old-growth if given time and space, are the most productive ecologically. A large area of old-growth and mature forests within the plan area still remains unprotected. For these forests to be logged would be a travesty. A one-time profit is far outweighed by the ecosystem benefits these trees provide standing. From safeguarding biodiversity, establishing relative refuges from the worst ravages of climate change, reducing flood and erosion risk, providing clean drinking water, greater resilience to fire, and the outdoor recreation value, mature forests cannot simply be replaced by monoculture tree farms. They are a precious resource and the plan should be protecting them, not opening them up to logging. In fact, the total value that the trees provide in the context of these complex forest ecosystems would be much greater than the price of the timber that would be fetched, if you were to consider climate stability and carbon sequestration, recreation revenues, and clean air and water that both local and broader communities rely on.

The updates to the plan should be based on the latest science for fire resilience, forestry best practices, and human and non-human biology. The proposed alternates weaken protection for the region's forests, clean water, and animal species such as salmon that underpin the ecosystem and bolster the economy.

The great forests of the Northwest are a jewel of our country. I urge the Forest Service to use this process to keep our forests standing today and into the future, and not cave to the timber industry's demands. Thank you for your consideration in representing the interests of the people, plants, and animals that call the Northwest home.