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Comments: I am writing to comment on the Forest Service's draft environmental impact statement for the proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan.

The 1994 Northwest Forest Plan has effectively in reversed the decline of mature and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. It has saved species, preserved clean water, provided sequestration of carbon dioxide, and improved local economies through recreational opportunities.

I feel that it is in the public's interest to maintain and strengthen existing forest protections in the Northwest Forest Plan. Maintaining protection for mature and old-growth forests and stands is critical for habitat preservation, wildfire control, climate mitigation, and species diversity.

I support a modified alternative B in order to maintain and continue the progress provided by the Northwest Forest Plan. The proposed amendment needs improvement to:

- * Preserve, restore, and expand old forests.

- * Maintain the safety of nearby dwellings using defensible space and limiting thinning of trees to within 500 feet of buildings.

- * Maintain healthy dry forests through limited, controlled fire rather than logging.

- * Improve habitat corridors.

- * Protect aquatic ecosystems.

Please amend the proposed action with standards and guidelines that:

- * Continue to define mature stands by stand age, rather than establishment year, to promote old-growth recovery. Recruit enough trees from the largest and oldest size class to develop and restore old-growth distribution through the region. Older and larger trees are inordinately important for resisting fire and drought, supporting biological diversity, and sequestering carbon dioxide.

- * Reduce road density to improve wildlife habitat connectivity and reduce impacts from flood events.

- * Maximize indigenous cultural fire management principles to restore ecologically appropriate fire activity and behavior across drier forest landscapes. Adopt plan components that support tribal co-management and co-stewardship, with the goal of preserving access to cultural and religious sites, restoration of traditional hunting and gathering in national forests, and other issues of interest to native tribes.

- * Remove the guideline for artificial creation of young forest in late-successional reserves. Natural disturbances will continue to create suitable amounts of complex early successional forest habitat in reserves.

- * Reduce the goal for logging our dry forests on the east side of the Cascades. Logging a third of our trees in the next 15 years is unsustainable, economically questionable, and counter to the habitat, water, and forest health goals of the Northwest Forest Plan. There is also a lack of evidence it will protect us from runaway wildfires. Large ponderosa pines in particular should be retained, as they are exceptionally fire-resistant trees.

I live among the trees on the west side of Bend, Oregon near the Deschutes National Forest. Naturally, fire risk is at the forefront of my mind. But logging doesn't improve the weather patterns driving the increasingly severe fires in the area; in fact, it exacerbates the underlying causes. Increasing our mature and old-growth forests is essential to help mitigate the damages caused by these aberrant wildfires. Don't destroy one of our most effective defenses in the name of saving it!

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan.

Sincerely,

Michael Jochimsen