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Comments: I want to start by (Hy'shqe) thanking you all for the opportunity to comment on the Northwest Forest Plan amendment. As someone who walks in the footsteps of my ancestors, and who has seen firsthand the importance of healthy, thriving forests, I want to remind you all of something central: our stewardship of these lands didn't begin 500 years ago. Indigenous peoples have cared for these forests since time immemorial, and that care is built on a foundation of wisdom, balance, and respect for the land that the Northwest Forest Plan, as it stands, must continue to uphold. Science for us was pure observation, observing the wildlife, taking chances on caring and cultivating the land. I know it's hard to believe but many species and trees, especially older ones were placed with a purpose and not all of that is lost or forgotten. If indigenous people are still here and the trees we have should hope that we can all live and work together.

The importance of old-growth forests for carbon sequestration is forgotten, and it is clear that these older trees aren't just there, they are caring for other younger trees, like a family - they are vital to the health of our planet. Any alternative that weakens protections for these forests is an affront to the very spirit of our relationship with the land. I stand with the call to protect and expand those protections through strategies like the Late Successional Reserve designation and Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

At the same time, it's critical we build our approach in a way that not only respects Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty, but actively brings Tribal consultation and co-stewardship into the fold. This isn't just a nice addition - it is an absolute necessity. The original science-based goals of this plan must remain at the heart of decision-making, and that must include the understanding that Indigenous communities are key players in the preservation and restoration of these lands. It's about honoring our collective responsibility to the environment, which has always been central to our survival and the survival of all beings.

As you move forward, remember that forest health and resilience are not defined by the amount of timber we extract but by the strength and vibrancy of the ecosystems we are entrusted to care for. Let us prioritize ecological health and climate resilience over profit and expansion. The wisdom of our ancestors, and the knowledge that Indigenous peoples have been stewards of this land for generations, must be reflected in the plan.

I urge you to not only maintain protections but to strengthen them, and to ensure that the voices and rights of Indigenous peoples are front and center in this process. Only then will we be able to truly build a future where both our forests and communities can thrive