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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Good Afternoon,

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. I support forest plan updates that are directed by local tribes, informed by the latest science, and adaptable for a more resilient climate future for our region. I don't believe we need to compromise forest protections in the process. Oregon and the Pacific Northwest are renowned for our clean rivers, vibrant salmon runs, and majestic old-growth forests. Our home is full of natural treasures that are largely safeguarded by the Northwest Forest Plan. The Northwest Forest Plan still protects the strong majority of the region's remaining old forests. Unfortunately, some of the amendments that are being considered could open the door to increased logging and undermine the protections that have preserved these critical ecosystems for decades.

The Plan protects irreplaceable old-growth forests, reserves critical habitat for imperiled species, and sets a precedent for forest management that prioritizes intact forests -- not timber harvest. When it was created in 1994, it represented the first large-scale, science-based plan for managing federal forestlands. It isn't just a policy -- it's a system of protection and care for our forests, water, and wildlife.

Today and in the past, tribes have been functionally left out of the process, thereby omitting critical indigenous knowledge from the Plan. I believe that tribes should be lead decision-makers and advisors to the plan amendments and their input and direction should lead all future decisions. We are excited to see progress towards this in the new amendments but would like to see a more tangible commitment to support tribal participation with funding and resources and meaningful engagement that is reflective of tribal sovereignty and the immense knowledge and expertise their members bring.

We also know that science and our world has experienced changes since the Plan's original inception in 1994. Across the globe, we are far more aware of the value of forests in the fight against climate change as they absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere. Locally in Central Oregon, we have seen a recent increase in wildfires, and we need to ensure we are following the best science to protect people, property, and forests.

The Plan's original vision to conserve intact forests is more important than ever. We can and should amend the Northwest Forest Plan to address its shortcomings - but we cannot lose key protections in the process. Our Northwest Forests are some of the best carbon-sequestration land in the world. We must protect them so that generations to come can enjoy clean air and water. Please consider the long-term effects and harm compromising their protections will have.

Thank you,

Alice g Weston

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