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First name: Britni

Last name: Cacan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I grew up in western Oregon, so the forests of the Pacific Northwest are very important to me. I've been an educator here for 13 years, I am a Christian and a member of Eugene-Springfield Interfaith EarthKeepers, and I enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. I grew up among Douglas fir forests, not realizing that most of the forests surrounding me were actually tree plantations for timber. I didn't experience the magic of an old growth forest until I was much older, and it made me sad to learn that there is already so little left. I want my students and all of our children to be able to experience healthy, diverse, mature and old growth forests that are also a defense against climate change, which is the greatest threat to their future.

Therefore, I am concerned that the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan weakens protections for our region's forests, clean water, and wildlife habitat. Despite what the timber industry proclaims, the latest science shows that old growth and mature forests are more resilient against wildfire, and they are critical carbon sinks for mitigating climate change. These forests are also important for preserving biodiversity, providing critical habitat for imperiled species that my students and I care deeply about, and they filter the drinking water for communities across the Pacific Northwest.

I support some elements of the amendment that includes a beneficial fire approach, Indigenous cultural practices and co-stewardship agreements. The Forest Service should retain all of Tribal inclusion plan components that are in Alternative B, but uncouple them from the forest management components that increase the age of trees and forests that can be logged. Increasing logging will not even help the economy as the dollar value of a tree left standing is much more than a log when you factor in all of the costs.

The Forest Service needs to stand up against the pressures of industry and short-term profits in order to preserve the life that we all depend on. We need a strong forest plan that integrates modern science with traditional ecological knowledge in order to meet the needs of future generations and the other species we share this planet with.