

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/17/2025 8:00:55 PM

First name: Benjamin

Last name: Zumeta

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I write to voice my vehement support for old growth forest protections in the Northwest Forest Plan. We have already logged 98% of our old growth forests and in doing so have grievously harmed our nation and descendants. Logging any more old growth would be a betrayal of our country for the profit of the few. I will commit my support to anyone protecting old growth forests, and use any legal means I can to remove from power those who log old growth.

Old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest greatly benefit us all by storing immense amounts of water from west coast winter storms, then slowly releasing it to soils, streams, and the atmosphere where it humidifies and seeds summer rainfall downwind. A health forest holds 1/3 of its 6-12ft soil volume in water, and over half of the wood volume. This amounts to health forest being akin to vast shallow lakes in their water storage capacity, which is what generates summer moisture across the continent. The worst wildfires in California history have happened inland and downwind of where vast tracks of coast redwood old growth has already been logged. This happened because these inland forests were made up of many smaller, less thickly barked second growth trees that were missing the 10 billion gallons of fog and rain once provided daily summer evapotranspiration from the now logged coast redwoods. Moreover, old growth forests help stop and slow fires nearby, as their evapotranspiration of upwards of 5,000gal per acre under a blanket of smoke humidifies and cools the area. I have seen this phenomena multiple times, including when it likely saved my house when the 2023 Smith River Fire was threatening to overrun my National Forest adjacent home and our place was on the emergency 4th fire line.

The greatest remaining salmon runs are based around rivers surrounded by more intact old growth forests. The same is true of Oregon and Washington old growth forest benefits to everywhere downwind and downstream, which is the entire continent. Old growth forests of are also the host of the world's most diverse soil, making them critical biodiversity preserves for helping solve challenges with climate and food production. In many ways, protecting our remaining old growth forests and helping steward regrowth forests towards having old growth characteristics is a national security issue of great importance. We will not provide our descendants the quality of life they deserve or that we had if we do not protect and regenerate old growth forests at the greatest scale possible.

This does not mean we cannot have a vibrant logging and wood product industry. It does mean we need to invest in techniques and technology development that utilizes the innumerable smaller trees in our regrowth forests that need to be thinned for forest health and wildfire severity mitigation. I support efforts that help protect and perpetuate larger, older trees, with all the benefits they provide, while also harvesting fire prone understory trees and using strategic thinning. Technology has been greatly improving for utilizing this material for large scale building projects that could help ease housing shortages, and we should facilitate this. We also need to structure forest land ownership and taxation to encourage and reward investing long term in older forests, while at the same time harvesting selectively and strategically as most second growth needs to be thinned.

Please uphold your duty to our country and our descendants and protect old growth forests and stewarding their regeneration.