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Comments: As a Quaker community committed to peace, integrity, and stewardship of the Earth, West Hills Friends Church urges the Forest Service to reject amendments that weaken the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) and instead strengthen protections for our region's forests, water, and wildlife.

For 30 years, the NWFP has provided a global model for conservation, safeguarding mature and old-growth forests that store carbon, support biodiversity, and sustain healthy watersheds. The proposed amendments threaten these protections by opening 800,000 acres of mature forests to logging, increasing logging rates by two to three times, and further imperiling species like the northern spotted owl, salmon, and marbled murrelet.

As Friends, we hold that all life is interconnected and that we are called to care for creation, not exploit it for short-term economic gain. The climate and biodiversity crises demand stronger conservation measures; not weaker ones. Logging of old and mature forests will only exacerbate climate change, degrade essential habitat, and increase wildfire risks for our communities.

We, the members of West Hills Friends Church, urge the Forest Service to:

Strengthen protections for mature and old-growth forests to safeguard habitat, water quality, and carbon storage, ensuring that these forests continue to function as part of a healthy ecosystem.

Maintain and expand the network of forest reserves to support biodiversity, wildlife migration, and climate resilience. Reducing reserve protections would increase habitat destruction, water pollution, and carbon loss, further endangering sensitive ecosystems.

Engage in true consultation with Indigenous Tribes by respecting sovereignty, supporting co-stewardship agreements, and ensuring full Tribal participation in decision-making processes. Indigenous knowledge, including cultural burning practices, must be recognized as central to sustainable forest management.

Advance environmental justice by assessing the impacts of forest management decisions on frontline communities, including impacts on air, water, and sustainable working conditions.

Shift wildfire strategies toward proven community safety measures rather than prioritizing logging under the guise of fire prevention. Fire-resilient old-growth forests should be protected, not cut down.

Rather than weakening the core protections of the NWFP, the Forest Service must strengthen and expand protections to ensure that these forests continue to provide clean water, carbon storage, and habitat for future generations.

West Hills Friends Church calls upon the Forest Service to uphold its responsibility to care for creation, prioritize long-term ecological health over commercial extraction, and ensure that our forests remain a source of life and renewal for all.

Submitted by West Hills Friends Church on March 17, 2025