

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/17/2025 10:16:03 PM

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Comments: Dear Regional Foresters Buchanan and Eberlien,

We are writing to comment on the Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) amendment. As residents of southwestern Oregon, we care deeply about public lands and the future of the Pacific Northwest's National Forests, and we strongly support the NFP's regional approach to ensure the viability of fish and wildlife associated with ancient forest ecosystems and in support of local communities.

Forests of the Cascades and Olympics are vital to our region, providing excellent water quality, crucial climate resilience, marvelous biological diversity, inspiring places for contemplation and recreation, and job opportunities. Since 1994, the NFP has improved watershed conditions and reduced threats to ancient forests and their inhabitants, including many rare and unique species that occur only in the Pacific Northwest.

After three decades, it is time for updates to address climate change and wildfire risks and the need for stronger Tribal inclusion, but we are concerned that the proposed alternatives stray too far from the plan's original aim of conservation.

The proposed NFP amendment is a good step forward in improving ecological resilience of dry fire-prone forests. It also provides valuable direction to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in decision-making and to expand co-stewardship opportunities to better address Tribal cultural needs, achieve forest management goals, and meet indigenous treaty and trust responsibilities.

However, the proposed alternatives focus on the economic benefits of increased forest harvest and do not take into account the values of ecosystem services that forests and healthy aquatic ecosystems provide - nor do the alternatives sufficiently analyze the values of other high-value sectors, such as outdoor recreation, that are also major economic drivers in our region.

The plan claims to enhance community stability but would produce only minor effects across the large socioeconomic region. The plan disregards the value of forests for habitat, climate stability and carbon sequestration, recreation, and clean air and water that our communities rely on.

In an era of climate change and increasing wildfire intensity, some vegetation management for wildfire risk reduction is necessary. That must be driven by best-practice science for creating fire-prepared communities along with ecosystem integrity and resilience - not driven by lumber profits.

Any fuels reduction must be evaluated and determined based on standards that prioritize and protect the needs of wildlife habitat and a healthy ecosystem, not on logging profit.

In conclusion, we would like to see the Northwest Forest Plan continue to emphasize conservation to protect mature and old-growth forests and the important water quality, wildlife habitat, carbon storage and other ecosystem services they provide, while better incorporating Indigenous perspectives. The Forest Service should target forest management activities in wildland-urban interface areas to more effectively protect homes and communities from wildfire risks.

Protecting mature and old-growth forest habitats requires thoughtful, strategic management that preserves the defining characteristics of these ecosystems while addressing the risks posed by severe wildfire and climate

change. A science-driven approach is essential to balance habitat conservation with forest restoration and sustainable timber harvest practices.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan.

Sincerely,

Kirk and Kris Vyverberg