

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/17/2025 11:03:22 PM

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Comments: To Regional Foresters Jacque Buchanan and Jennifer Eberlien:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Northwest Forest Plan amendment.

Our Northwest Forests are special places... mature and old growth trees, wildlife habitat, plants, animals, lakes, streams, rivers, riparian areas, shorelines, plains, and mountains. The ability to recreate in these areas is beneficial to our personal health and our enjoyment of life, as well as allowing us to gain an understanding of the environment and how everything is interconnected. One element is connected to the next, which makes it vital for us to protect and maintain these forests for their health, the health of the environment (air, water, land) and our communities health.

The original Northwest Forest Plan must be altered in a positive way, in order to correct its shortcomings and not allow it to be further degraded from its original purpose. None of the alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) are good enough to uphold that legacy.

The Forest Service should retain all of the Tribal inclusion plan components that are in Alternative B, but separate them from the forest management components that allow older trees and forests to be logged.

Preserving biodiversity and connected wildlife habitat across the region should be of the utmost importance of this forest plan amendment. This includes threatened species, and others that have been impacted by the loss and fragmentation of their habitat, and those awaiting Endangered Species Act listing decisions.

The amendment should recognize the wide variety of social and economic benefits National Forests provide for local communities and the region as a whole - not just timber, but also clean water, climate stability, quality of life, and outdoor recreation.

The DEIS' view of fire as the primary threat to the remaining late successional reserves is a mistake - logging is the greater threat. Preserving and restoring mature and old-growth forests can enhance fire resistance and resilience. Fuels and fire management should focus on homesite ignition zones, non-commercial treatments and beneficial fire use, not commercial logging. Standards must ensure that fuel reduction is both needed and effective before logging is allowed.

Indigenous cultural burning and wildland fire use should be prioritized.

Commercial logging for fuel reduction can negatively impact:

- * wildlife habitat
- * removes large fire-resistant trees
- * introduce invasive species
- * create hazardous fire conditions

The Forest Service must keep the Northwest Forest Plan strong by doing the following:

1. Strengthen protections for mature and old-growth forests to ensure habitat, water quality, and carbon storage, and recruit more mature and old forests to restore a functional ecosystem.

2. Maintain or expand protections for the network of forest reserves to allow natural processes to flourish, ensure connectivity for wildlife, and support the recovery of imperiled species. Any reduction in forest reserve protections would increase harmful impacts such as habitat destruction, sediment in streams, and carbon loss, further endangering sensitive ecosystems.

3. Truly respect and honor Tribes and their sovereignty, and provide resources to support their full participation in decision-making. The Forest Service must support co-stewardship agreements, cultural burning? practices, first food harvesting, and youth education while ensuring equitable access to planning processes. Pairing these components with the Forest Service's plan for weakened environmental protections is a false? choice manufactured by the agency.

4. Address environmental justice by analyzing impacts on air, water, and communities and ensuring fair, sustainable working conditions.

5. Shift wildfire strategies to prioritize community safety and proven prevention measures over logging. The Federal Advisory Committee process that informed the DEIS was rushed, excluded scientists and adopted scientific findings in a biased manner.

The amendment should enhance the Northwest Forest Plan by adding to its network of reserves, not open the door to logging them in the name of preservation. A strong forest plan must incorporate modern science and public values, robust and honest Tribal consultation, and the needs of future generations. We need to keep in mind future generations and what we will be leaving them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Burton