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Comments: Public Comment on Northwest Forest Plan Amendments

Tuleyome is a coalition of land stewards. We work with outdoor enthusiasts, farmers, Tribal Nations, advocates, scientists, schools and government agencies. We write to express our support for the proposed amendments to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). The original NWFP was written in 1994, and we agree that updates are necessary because our environment and climate have changed significantly since then. We appreciate that these amendments address the challenges facing our forests today and aim to develop cross-cutting solutions. The key focus areas-Fire Resilience, Economic Benefits, Habitat, Adapting to Changing Climates, and Tribal Responsibilities-are all excellent targets that deserve our attention.

In recent years, fires have grown increasingly severe across California and the broader region. We need solutions that are reflected in both implementation practices and system strengthening approaches. On the implementation side, mechanical thinning, indigenous knowledge, and traditional stewardship practices such as cultural burns and intentional fires that mimic natural fire patterns are essential for mitigating wildfire risk. These practices have proven effective and should be expanded. Beyond these direct interventions, we should also focus on methods that strengthen our systems, such as programs dedicated to job skill development related to forest management. By building capacity within communities, we create sustainable approaches for continuous forest protection.

The economic benefits for rural communities represent another important target area in the amendments. These benefits become possible when we implement programs that provide job training and skill building, encouraging future generations to become stewards of the forest. Rural communities deserve opportunities to pursue careers that directly relate to and positively impact their surroundings. Additionally, small businesses and communities connected to forests gain economic advantages when forests are managed well. Healthy forests maintain steady flows of visitors, which contributes to travelers patronizing local restaurants, gas stations, and other businesses, helping to strengthen communities economically. Furthermore, well-managed forests mean fewer catastrophic fires, which translates to fewer homes and businesses lost to disaster.

These improved management practices also help protect critical habitats. We particularly appreciate that the amendments to the NWFP include a matrix to understand how management practices should change based on whether forests are wet or dry, old-growth or newer stands. This recognition that not all forests are the same is crucial-it means that management practices need to be flexible and adaptive to different forest conditions. Forest managers must be able to adjust their techniques to the specific characteristics of the forests under their care. This nuanced approach is especially important as climate change affects wet and dry forests differently.

As our climate continues to change, it is imperative that forest stewards adapt their practices to ensure that the right methods are being used to mitigate fires and manage our forests effectively. While western scientific knowledge helps us understand changes in our forest ecosystems, we must also make room for indigenous

knowledge and work collaboratively with diverse communities. It's important that we recognize we have much to learn from indigenous wisdom that has sustained these landscapes for generations.

Just as we develop methods to increase participation from rural communities through job training and skill building, we should take similar approaches with indigenous communities. Creating spaces for and positions held by indigenous community members ensures that these communities are included and recognized as knowledgeable contributors to forest management solutions. This type of intentional inclusion will strengthen both the approaches and practices we use to protect our forests.

In conclusion, the amendments to the Northwest Forest Plan represent a thoughtful step forward in addressing the complex challenges facing our forest ecosystems today. By integrating diverse knowledge systems, supporting local communities, and adopting adaptive management practices, these amendments provide a promising framework for sustainable forest stewardship in the changing environmental landscape.