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First name: Aletha

Last name: Woodruff

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Aletha Woodruff and I am a concerned citizen that lives in Oregon and has grown up in the PNW my whole life. I recreate in these forests as a hiker, backpacker and skier. Beyond my enjoyment and personal benefit from healthy forests, I recognize the even greater importance of making decisions that support biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and reduce carbon worldwide.

I am the descendant of loggers and mill workers, and understand the need for some logging. While I support some logging, I think that some of the proposals that increase logging and open old growth logging are grossly irresponsible and are designed for corporate profit and not for the well-being of the forests, workers, and people. In this time of climate change, increasing wildfires, and watershed degradation we need leaders to make decisions that have foresight for the wellness of people and future generations, not corporate interest.

The Northwest Forest Plan is critical for keeping the Pacific Northwest a special place through the restoration of forests and watersheds damaged by irresponsible past logging and road building, recovery of economically and ecologically valuable salmon runs, protection of wildlife habitat and old-growth forests, and ensuring our National Forests are part of a natural climate solution.

I am concerned that the Forest Service's proposed amendment to the Plan weakens protections for our region's forests, clean water, and wildlife habitat. If enacted, these changes would double or even triple logging levels across our public forests, open mature and old-growth trees to being cut, and sideline the protections that communities, wildlife, and ecosystems depend on.

I support some elements of the amendment that includes a beneficial fire approach and support of Indigenous cultural burning and co-stewardship agreements. The Forest Service should retain all of the Tribal inclusion plan components that are in Alternative B, but uncouple them from the forest management components that increase the age of trees and forests that can be logged.

Preserving biodiversity and connected wildlife habitat across the region should be a core principle of this forest plan amendment. This includes not only threatened species, but others that have been impacted by the loss and fragmentation of their habitat, and those awaiting state and/or federal 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.

Fire resistance and resilience can be bolstered by preserving and restoring mature and old-growth forests. Fuels and fire management should focus on the home ignition zone and on non-commercial treatments and beneficial fire use, not commercial logging. Indigenous cultural burning and wildland fire use should be prioritized.

Commercial logging for fuel reduction can negatively impact wildlife habitat, remove large fire-resistant trees, introduce invasive species, and create hazardous fire conditions. Standards must ensure that fuel reduction is both needed and effective before logging is allowed.

The Forest Service must reject plans to weaken core protections of the Northwest Forest Plan, and do the following:

- *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.

- *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.

*Genuinely consult with Tribes, respect 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. We must address environmental justice by analyzing impacts on air, water, and communities and ensuring fair, sustainable working conditions. And we must shift wildfire strategies to prioritize community safety and proven prevention measures over logging.

I believe we need a strong forest plan that incorporates modern science and public values, robust and honest tribal consultation, and the needs of future generations. The health of our forests is vitally important for all of us and I hope that the voice of the people is heard over the voice of corporate interest.

Thank you for your consideration.