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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: US Forest Service

Re: NW Forest Plan Amendment

Date: 3/17/25

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I am Dr. Theodora Tsongas, an environmental health scientist. We need a strong amendment to protect forests for water, wildlife, carbon sequestration, wildfire resilience, and old-growth and old forest protection and restoration, and very important to this plan, we need tribal engagement and leadership. This is especially necessary in light of the current climate emergency. We must change our attitudes and management practices to respond to this emergency. That means we cannot continue the folly of fire exclusion in native old-growth forests. We need to shift to proactively managing forests with fire. Fire resilience can be restored in fire-adapted forests with ecological fire use, but not with aggressive fire suppression. And we have to follow the lead of Indigenous people who have been successful in actively managing forests for fire resilience through Indigenous cultural burning. The Northwest Forest Plan amendment must authorize a revival of Indigenous cultural burning along with large-scale prescribed burning and managed wildfire if it really seeks to restore fire resilience.

We have learned that aggressive wildfire suppression is not really excluding fire; instead it's igniting human-caused fires during the worst weather and fuel conditions where high-intensity fire is almost guaranteed.

And, finally, our forests are so important to our survival and provide so many services that we must eliminate timber harvest from national forests altogether. We will not be successful in combating climate disruption if we harvest the 'lungs' of the planet. Please do not be afraid to make our forest protections as strong as possible. Thank you for your time and work.