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Comments: Please do not amend or abandon the Northwest Forest Plan. Regulations that protect mature stands, old growth, vital habitats, headwaters and riparian areas are absolutely essential to our nation's natural resources.

Timber and investment lobbyists would have you believe three things: that domestic timber supplies are demanding heavier harvests from mature and old growth forest stands, that timber industry jobs are lost as a result of environmental impact studies and vital protections, and that thinning mature canopies will reduce fire risk to surrounding communities. None of these things are true, and current independent scientific research proves this on all three points.

The United States is one of the world's top exporters of raw timber. These exports support obscene profits for a select few top-level magnates and investors, while giving a false picture of domestic lumber scarcities. Domestic timber supplies are sufficient to service our national demands if American logs remain in America.

The timber industry has for decades touted forests as "America's renewable resource". After more than one hundred years of national lands management, the industry needs to show us and rely upon the renewal. Harvesting timber from the few remaining old growth forest stands in America is ill-thought, unnecessary and unsustainable. Such activities do much more harm to timber job security than vital forest protections. Environmental impact reviews and statements do not cripple logging companies, but help to insure long-picture job security for timber workers by maintaining more healthy forests for a sustainable future.

The term "thinning" is currently being applied to a wide range of timber harvest activities, including the reduction of mature canopies from 90% shade to 30% shade and removal of trees up to 36" in diameter. Meanwhile, industry spokespersons and local legislators preach to communities that "thinning" will protect them from catastrophic fire risks. Exactly the opposite is true. Cutting edge recent studies conducted by forest scientists like Chad Hansen, Dominick Dellasala and others, have amassed tons of relevant data and prove that heavier canopies and mature forest stands are more fire resistant and resilient, while open, sunnier and drier stands promote faster hotter fires that threaten conflagration level damage to surrounding lands and communities. In addition, canopy reduction is most often a death sentence for riparian areas, headwaters and spring sources that serve our local communities and feed national aquifers.

Mature forests and old growth trees sequester more carbon and remove CO2 far more efficiently than do smaller trees and thinned forests. Naturally and sustainably managed forests support soil tilth, microfauna and microflora, and balanced biodiverse ecosystems that are cornerstones of our planet's continued health.

Of course, timber harvests are necessary to supply our country's demands for lumber and forest products. These resources, however, must be managed with intelligence, forethought, balance and great care to provide for the future of our environment and human culture on Earth.

It has been said that people like to believe that industry sustains them but forget that nature sustains industry. Please don't act rashly, remove these vital protections and make irreparable mistakes that future generations must regret.