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First name: Tova

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Priya Shahani,

I intended to post a comment/objection on the NWFP Amendment. I thought comments were accepted through 3/17/2025, but I can't figure out how to post the comment on the Forest Service Project page. I have enclosed my comments here. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. Tova

I grew up in Oregon and remember the Timber Wars of the 1990s. I remember the spotted owl and the environmental regulations that devastated loggers, mills and towns in Oregon leaving the industry forever changed. The Northwest Forest Plan protects old growth stands on federal lands in Oregon and Washington as reserves for viable populations of endangered or rare species to live. The survey and manage requirement that became part of the plan was the basis for litigation of nearly every proposed sale. Timber sales on federal land dropped 80-90%. Oregon Public Broadcasting did a series called the "Timber Wars," that documents the history and current events of the timber wars in Oregon.

For 30 years, the Northwest Forest Plan has protected the spectacular old growth stands we have today, and increased economic opportunity, with arguably higher economic value, such as outdoor recreation, clean water, and fisheries. Our forests protect the salmon fishery that my family has been invested in for generations, clean drinking water in our communities, and enhanced carbon capture that is increasingly important to all of us living in a warming climate. The forest, whether we log, hike, camp, hunt or birdwatch, is part of our tradition. One of the greatest representations of this tradition is in Tribal communities across the region, whose legacy and heritage can be honored through commitment to Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights in decision making about forests. Pacific Northwest forests are one of the most productive on the planet.

The Northwest Forest Plan was established in a time of change and opposing interest in Oregon forests. The Forest Service, once a friend of the logging industry, expanded their interest to include ecosystem management. Concerns were raised about the warming climate and habitat loss, and automation and international competition was impacting the industry. The Timber wars are not over[mdash]logging isn't the way of life it used to be, forests are burning up, and the spotted owl is getting pushed out by another owl. Some towns lost a lot while others attracted a new economy. Oregonian loggers and environmentalists learned to find common ground for a more sustainable future in the forest industry through collaborative forest management projects that improved forest health and kept a small local industry afloat.

The Timber War has new players. Today the logging industry is booming on Oregon's private timber lands, about 40% of which are owned by real estate trusts or hedge fund investors -- Weyerhaeuser real estate investment trust is one of the biggest landowners. Profits from the industry line the pockets of faraway investors, while owners maximize profits by cutting young trees and sending the timber overseas before selling the clearcut land. The young trees they grow drink more water from the ground, and intensive tree farming practices add fertilizers and other chemicals to the environment. Most of the old mills don't exist anymore to process logs (only 1 mill of 40 remains in Grant Co.), the industry employs locals at less than a quarter of the previous rate, and tax cuts on private lands have cost Oregon an estimated 3 billion dollars. Oregon towns and counties have lost more to tax cuts on private lands than they did on cuts to logging on federal land. When the revenue from the timber tax dried up, public services in towns across Oregon disappeared.

I oppose an amendment to open over 800,000 acres of protected federal forest land to logging. The Northwest Forest Plan has shaped forest management in the northwest and saved old-growth forests to preserve ecosystems, store carbon, clean water, improve fire resilience and protect other valuable industries. Our traditional logging industry in Oregon is gone. Old growth that is logged now will not benefit the state of Oregon or local logging communities and will damage other valuable economies in the region. We don't have the loggers to cut the trees or mills to process them. We have nothing to gain economically - but the owners and investors of big real estate trusts do!

I encourage Oregonians to look closer to home for a collaborative solution to resource management in all our forests that protects the best interests of locals in communities all over Oregon and Washington, the sovereign tribal entities, and the health of our forests for the nation and the world. The history and legacy of the Northwest Forest Plan may serve as a guide.