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Comments: To the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team and Responsible Official:

I am writing to support strong protections for wildlife habitat, cultural values, and ecological integrity in the Blue Mountains.

The forests of Eastern Oregon are diverse and complex. They provide irreplaceable natural values - clean, cold water, rare plants, fish, and wildlife, and a connectivity corridor of continental importance - that have supported human communities for millennia.

To the extent they belong to anyone, the public lands of the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa Whitman National Forests belong to all of us. In this age of climate change and a biodiversity crisis, the diverse ecosystems of the Blue Mountains deserve more protections, not more resource extraction. Scientists have highlighted the Blue Mountains as one of the best conservation opportunities in the lower 48.

This planning process has been going on for years during which time, the Forest Service has given preferential treatment to local politicians, the timber and livestock industries, and their allies. This process should allow all members of the public to be on equal footing and give special consideration to Tribal concerns.

A good outcome must include clear, enforceable standards and protections for fish and wildlife, water and riparian areas, mature and large trees, and undeveloped landscapes. Many of these landscapes remain largely intact and functioning. They do not need more logging and grazing. They need better conservation - and enforceable rules.

Destructive logging, livestock grazing, and mining should be deprioritized. The public values that flow from conservation often exceed the value of logging and should be considered as no less important. These include clean water, biodiversity, and climate stability.

In some places, these forests have road densities rivalling urban areas. To ensure clean water and healthy wildlife populations, the density of roads must be reduced and off-road motorized travel must be curtailed.

The Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision process offers an opportunity to safeguard natural and cultural values for current and future generations of Oregonians, in line with the US Forest Service's multiple use mandate. It is incumbent upon the leadership of the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests to ensure that this Revision results in meaningful standards and guidelines to protect our intact mature and old-growth forests, support vulnerable riparian areas and species, and remain responsive to the public interest--not just timber and mining interests--while shaping the future of this ecoregion.

Sincerely,

Fiona Noonan