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Organization:

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Comments:

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Dear Personnel:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Blue Mountain Forest Plans revision. I believe that the U.S. Forest Service should prioritize protection for fish and wildlife and old growth forests and deprioritize extractive uses like logging and livestock grazing. My comments are taken directly from information provided by the Hells Canyon Council which I fully support. Specifically, I believe the forest plan should include the following.

*Include strong and enforceable standards (not just guidelines) for the ecological parts of the plan. This includes creating strong standards for habitat connectivity across the forests, as well as for special habitats like aquatic ecosystems, aspen groves, and grasslands.

*Retain the Eastside Screens, which provide protections for mature and old growth trees. The current draft plan erases any significant protections for big trees (trees that are greater than 21" diameter at breast height).

*Retain existing management areas for old growth forests and backcountry recreation. These exist in the current forest plans but were pulled out or watered down in the new version, presumably to open up more acres for logging.

*Create standards and a new management area for fish and wildlife habitat connectivity. These three National Forests make up a connectivity corridor of continental importance, and the new plans should provide long-term security for fish and wildlife movement across the Blues.

*Protect for roadless areas regardless of the future of the Roadless Rule. Roadless areas may lose national protection if the Roadless Rule is rescinded, but individual National Forests can still protect them in forest plans if they so choose. New forest plans should provide protections for these last undeveloped lands.

*Thoughtfully addresses roads, road densities, and motorized access. Elk, salmon, and many other species require a plan that tackles this issue, even though it's complicated.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Scott Findholt