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Comments: I am a year-round recreator in Washington and Oregon, particularly in the Blue Mountains. I am also concerned about the role of forest management in climate change mitigation, community vitality, wildlife habitat and resource conservation.

One need only listen to Dr. David Mildrexler, forest ecologist, talk about the Refugia of the Blue Mountains to gain an appreciation of the importance of the forest ecoregion of the Blues. It is a key connector between the Cascades and the Rockies for migratory animals and birds, is important for addressing climate change, and hugely supports cultural and biodiversity. Any further intrusion into the Inventoried Roadless Areas puts all of this at risk. Protect what we have. No new roads.

I do not think the PNW Forest Plan regarding grazing has provided anything more than lip service around protection of forest ecosystems and wildlife habitats. I personally have seen blatant overgrazing in Oregon forests and have been told by Forest Service personnel that they are unable to enforce the regulations due to lack of staffing and resistance from ranchers. Cows should not be permitted to destroy riparian habitats. Permits for grazing should not be issued if they cannot be enforced.

The value of recreation as an economic driver cannot be overstated but must be balanced with the appropriate use of our forest resources. Opening forest lands to 4-wheelers whose main goal is to tear up the terrain is contrary to sustainable management. It is crucial that there is sufficient outreach, education, monitoring and enforcement.

I am very concerned about the health of our wildland fire fighters. In the 2023 Direction to Wildland Fire Leadership from Sec'y Holland and Sec'y Vilsack, there was numerous mentions about taking better care of them. But there was no directive to require or to provide masks for the fire fighters. We are seeing the disastrous consequences with some of our nation's strongest and most dedicated defenders being afflicted with horrendous lung issues and various cancers due to exposure to smoke.