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First name: Philip

Last name: Dussin

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revisions DEIS Team,

I am writing to oppose, in the strongest terms, the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision #301397, a plan which eliminates protections across the board for some of the most in-tact and beautiful transition ecosystems in the country. Born in Washington and living in Oregon, I've always known the Blue Mountains make up an iconic region of both states and one that we must protect. The Wallowa Whitman, Umatilla, and Malheur National Forests make up some of the most ecologically diverse regions across America and are a massive carbon sink helping to protect our climate and counter anthropogenic emissions. The public lands of the Blue Mountains provide habitat and connectivity for fish and wildlife, clean water, mature and old growth forests. These lands serve as the only connection point between the Rocky Mountains to the Cascade Range. This land is invaluable, and yet the proposed revision would exploit and tear it apart.

Removing size limits when logging does nothing but tear down the most resilient and structural features of ancient forests: old growth trees. These giants exist to provide shelter, habitat, climate protection, fire resistance, and more. Size limits on tree logging has been a sensible policy for decades because cutting down the largest trees does an outsized amount of damage to the broader ecosystem. If the goal is wildfire prevention, cutting down large trees will only increase fire damage to these forests.

More development and more logging means, according to your DEIS, serious harm to wildlife and the pollution of human water sources, and that is something that locals and natives deserve a say in. Many endangered species such as spotted owl, marten, and coho salmon rely on this area as a place of connectivity and relatively undisturbed habitat. The management goals of this proposal would significantly harm all three and more, and likely violate the Endangered Species Act in doing so. Many of the nearby towns also draw their water from these forests. Road development, increased grazing, and logging machinery mean that water is going to be polluted, and that is simply not fair to those people. They deserve a say in how those resources that directly affect them are managed--it's not the federal government's place to allow timber companies from other states come in and do as they please at the cost of the locals' health. This is not to mention the native tribes such as the Nez Perce and Umatilla who have relied on these lands and resources for thousands of years. They deserve a say.

Additionally, the reduced grazing restrictions will cause undue harm to the environment, while providing no real benefit to the local economy. The program is not monitored nearly enough and receives little enforcement. Any economic gains for the region will be more than outweighed by the overwhelming damage done to the ecosystem, and most of the profit will go to distant timber executives.

As humans, we require natural resources, but there are many managed plantations and open areas to provide timber and grazing. Attacking one of the few remaining protected natural areas is greedy and short-sighted. If we don't protect areas like the Blue Mountains and focus on maximizing logging and development, it won't be long before we're all out of trees. It is simply an unsustainable approach focused on short-term shareholder value rather than consistent output. The Western Oregon logging projects of the mid-twentieth century are a strong example of this.

Any proposal that moves forward should increase protections for such an important and beautiful place, rather than stripping them away. The Blue Mountains are not only a recreation opportunity but a source of life and a home for wildlife, indigenous tribes, and local communities. As your DEIS acknowledges, increasing logging and grazing here poses a serious risk to the health of such a vital connective region. We need a proposal that increases protections for old and mature trees, wildlife, waterways and watersheds, and biodiversity. We need a

forest plan that prevents unnecessary road development and fragmentation, and considers the climate impacts associated and consults and listens to indigenous tribes and local communities.

For all of these reasons, I say no to the current Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision. It simply cannot go through.

Sincerely,
Philip Dussin