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Comments: Thank you for considering these comments submitted by Friends of Animals, an international animal advocacy group founded in 1957 with hundreds of members in Oregon and Washington.

To the U.S. Forest Service:

Friends of Animals is asking you to protect the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon and southwestern Washington and keep strong safeguards in place.

Why?

Because the lives of animals such as elk, Pacific martens, goshawks, pileated woodpeckers, Chinook and coho salmon depend on it.

The Forest Service's careless proposal to revise the Blue Mountains Forest Plan is designed to carry out Trump's Executive Order to fully exploit our forests for maximum timber production, as well as this administration's planned rescission of the Roadless Rule. These ongoing attacks on our public lands are unacceptable.

More logging and fewer safeguards is the wrong direction for the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountains encompass nearly five million acres of public land and some of the most important forests, watersheds, wildlife habitat, and roadless areas in the Pacific Northwest. These forests provide clean drinking water, support fish and wildlife, store climate-warming carbon, and offer world-class opportunities for wildlife watching.

Science matters, and scientists have identified the Blue Mountains as one of the most important conservation areas in the lower 48 states.

We are deeply concerned that the Forest Service's preferred alternative for the Blue Mountains would weaken protections for clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, mature and old-growth forests, and roadless landscapes while increasing logging and reducing public accountability.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

[bull] The proposal removes limits on cutting the largest remaining trees, which constitute just 3% of the trees across this area but store 42% of its above-ground carbon.

[bull] The proposal also removes road density limits throughout the three national forests and presumes removal of protections for 721,000 acres of roadless areas, despite the vital importance of low road density for salmon, elk, and other wildlife, and recently published science reiterating the importance of unroaded areas for ecosystem integrity.

[bull] Among the places that would be threatened are the Malheur Canyons. The roadless wildlands around Glacier Mountain and the North Fork Malheur lie between the nearby Strawberry Mountain and Monument Rock

Wilderness areas, providing important habitat connectivity and a diversity of habitats. As a transition zone between forest and desert habitats, the North Fork Malheur River and tributaries also provide important connectivity for wildlife movement across the area and between seasonal habitats. A mix of Ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests line the canyons of the designated Wild & Scenic Malheur and North Fork Malheur Rivers. The high quality, chilly water that feed these two major rivers provides critical habitat for threatened bull trout.

At a time when climate change and biodiversity loss are accelerating, the Blue Mountains should be managed for resilience, ecological integrity, and the long-term public interest. We urge the Forest Service to:

- * Maintain strong, enforceable protections for clean water, fish, wildlife, and mature and old-growth forests.
- * Protect roadless areas and other intact landscapes from unnecessary development and fragmentation.
- * Prioritize climate resilience, biodiversity, and watershed protection in forest management decisions.
- * Ensure a transparent, science-based process for future project-level decisions with meaningful opportunities for public participation.

The Blue Mountains belong to the wildlife who depend on them for their survival. Not to mention, humans deserve healthy forests, clean water and air, and wild places that still feel wild.

Sincerely,

Nicole Rivard

Media/Government Relations Manager

Friends of Animals