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Dear BLM,

The forests of Oregon, most in public ownership, are the basis for both the economic and ecological health of the State. My wife and I have lived here since 1990 and in seventeen years more families have been making their homes in the woods every year In the "woodland-urban interface". Why are we all here? What is the common driving force and what are our common concerns? What do the taxpayers expect from BLM staff who are hired to serve our needs in the management of public lands, and not the needs of special interest groups?

Hundreds of families in our valley have moved from the hectic, noisy, barren, smog-air of city living. We have intense appreciation of the beauty of the forest environment and the serenity and peace of this magical "woodland-urban interface". We hike the trails, canoe the clean lakes, fish the cool rivers, and set up camp amidst the ancient trees, the flowers and wildlife we have never before imagined! So why are we concerned? The direction of the WOPR is to unravel the protections of the landmark Northwest Forest Plan and lead to water pollution, degraded habitat and increased conflict and controversy.

Of major concern to all is the possibility of fire. Here in southern Oregon we have lived through a number of fires over the past 15 years. The draft plan agrees that these forests are the worst in every category: high fire severity, high fire hazard and low fire resiliency. Clearcut logging and reduction of stream buffers increase fire danger. Fires will spread faster because of the windy conditions, small low-branched "regenerating" trees and dry undergrowth. Our rivers will flow hotter and muddier to the point that fish may become diseased and unable to reproduce and flood events will be exacerbated. We must reject a plan that increases fire danger over the long term. Many studies predict that the major global climate changes will increase fire severity. The draft plan fails to analyze this phenomenon within the long term projections of the plan.

There are three OHV areas in the Medford district. Why are we honored with a plan for ten additional OHV sites while other districts get none to four maximum? Have you considered that being surrounded by this many OHV sites increases the possibility of fire in our woods? How about the increase in the spread of noxious weeds, noise pollution and just plain frantic motorists with their unhealthy fumes?

What significant information is lacking in the WOPR that would have a major bearing on the analysis? We are concerned with the Visual Resource Management aspects of the planning process. Have you estimated what would be the major economic loss to property owners when a very unpleasant "viewshed" is created? Have you also evaluated the economic loss to the many businesses that are nourished by the tourists who visit our forests in order to enjoy the beauty of our landscape, animal life, quiet hiking trails, fishing, etc.

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The present Administration is expert in creating conflict and divisiveness. There does not have to be a conflict between timber production and a "resource management plan" that manages the forest on OUR behalf. We must adjust to a leaner, trimmer timber industry based on restoration thinning and fuels reduction, not old-growth clearcutting. We support "no action", option one.

CC: Oregon Congressional delegations

Senator Ron Wyden

Senator Gordon Smith

Rep. Peter DeFazio

Rep. Greg Walden

Rep. Earl Blumenhauer

Rep. Darlene Hooley

Rep. David Wu

Nanni Kesaelog
Lilli Ann K. Rosenthal