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To the Bureau of Land Management:

These comments are in regard to the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR), the BLM's new management plan for 2.5 million acres of forestlands, stretching from the Clackamas River south to the Siskiyou Mountains -- including much of the spectacular Wild Rogue Wilderness Proposal. Even though precious few old-growth forests remain in the Pacific Northwest, the new plan would boost logging of old-growth trees, destroy habitat for wild Pacific salmon, send mudslides and silt into Oregon rivers and streams, and scar the landscape with hundreds of new clear cuts. Thousands of people depend on these forests for their scenic views, recreation areas, drinking water, and sustainable economic ventures.

Oregonians don't have to choose between a healthy timber industry and their old-growth forest heritage. Oregon's timber industry has adapted away from cutting old growth, since federal logging was curtailed in the mid-90s. The Western Wood Products Association reports that production in the 13-state Western region in 2005 was its highest since 1990, paced by increased output from mills in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Oregon's mills don't need old growth to be viable.

Many Oregon forest managers are already moving beyond the conflicts of the past. By focusing on previously logged public forestlands - many of which are now overgrown and in need of thinning - they are providing wood to local mills while actually improving conditions for fish and wildlife and keeping saws out of old growth forests.

Collaborative groups like those on the Siuslaw National Forest bring together loggers, local governments, conservation groups and to design projects with broad community support. The Siuslaw is consistently among the largest timber producers of any national forest in Oregon.

The BLM is taking huge steps backwards from the common ground that has been built by local governments, conservation groups, loggers, and rural residents around restoration thinning. The WOPR is a drastic return to controversial forest management that benefits very few and damages resources, public trust, and quality of life for many.

Public land managers should focus their efforts on restoring the millions of acres of dense, young tree plantations that can provide sustainable jobs and wood products while restoring forest and watershed health.

I urge you to safeguard all of our remaining old-growth forests with a zero-cut policy.

Sincerely,

Britt Witherspoon
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