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Bureau of Land Management  
Western Oregon Plan Revisions Office  
333 SW 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Staff at the BLM:

For 37 years I have lived, worked, raised a family, and recreated very close to lands that will be affected by the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR). In fact, I live only a few miles from major acreage managed by BLM that apparently will be clear cut under the current option. I am writing to voice my very strong opposition to that option. For now, I think all lands should continue to be managed under the provisions of the Northwest Forest Plan. My reasons range from the personal and local to the global, and from concerns about the immediate repercussions of the plan to those that will affect future generations. I will summarize those reasons below.

**Economic Losses:**

- I live on the South Fork of the Alsea River, downriver from areas scheduled for clear cutting under the current proposal. My property and that of my neighbors will suffer severe damage as a result of further clear cutting upriver from our homes. During the past few years, there has been a significant amount of clear cutting by private companies upriver from our homes. Three results are obvious after 37 years of firsthand observations of the river here.
  1. The river fills with mud and debris more quickly than usual after rainfall.
  2. The river rises fast after a heavy rain, overflowing its banks and flooding more quickly than usual; huge amounts of soil from our properties have been carried away by the river, producing severe erosion that is causing us much anxiety.
  3. The river bottom itself has silted up completely over the past few years: the rocks on the river bottom used to be "clean"; now, they are completely covered year-round with sediment. This endangers aquatic life and has a ripple effect on the economy.
- Allowing further clear cutting will only compound these problems, especially if the buffer by streams is reduced to only 25 feet, which is almost nothing when one considers these and other factors.
- People who live along the many rivers and streams will definitely end up with less actual acreage, and we will incur significant expense in both materials and labor trying to prevent further erosion. (Of course there have been certain years when flooding has been caused primarily by unusual rainfall, but the clear cuts exacerbate the effects of those events.)
- Clear cuts cause or at least contribute significantly to these problems: first, the vegetation above ground that absorbs the rain is simply gone, and second, the root systems that hold the water back and then release it more slowly are gone as well.
- An additional cost is that of removing mudslides—one that burdens all taxpayers. The cause and effect relationship between clear cuts and mudslides is clear to anyone who lives in the

Coast Range. Just two winters ago, for example, one edge of a clear cut upriver from my home gave way, and a huge mudslide completely covered South Fork Road. It took months to clear, and the road was closed for a significant part of the winter. Many people commute to work and to shop in the Willamette Valley over that road, so they incurred the costs and inconvenience of driving longer distances as they took alternate routes. I am enclosing two photographs of that clear cut and slide.

### **Environmental Damage:**

All of the phenomena described above result not only in economic losses to families and communities, but also in sometimes irreversible damage to the environment. Scientists have only begun to understand the complexities of ecosystems, and each passing year reveals the interdependence and fragility of all their components. I will leave the detailing of these concerns to others more well-versed in the scientific literature than I, but these concerns are actually a thousand-fold more important in my mind than my personal concerns because of their long-term, more extensive effects.

### **Global Climate Change:**

It is universally agreed upon that old-growth trees play a huge role in the absorption of carbon dioxide and therefore in counteracting global warming. In the latest round of international agreements, many countries have agreed to preserve their rainforests; we need to do our part as well for the long-term health of the planet and therefore of future generations.

### **Rationale for the WOPR:**

I strongly disagree with the fundamental reasons for the WOPR:

- Citing the goals of the sustained yield mandated by the O & C Act of 1937 is unreasonable and anachronistic. Since then, the knowledge and understanding we have gained about both timber production and the environment ethically require that we harvest timber more conservatively and sustainably. We have the knowledge, the tools, and the resources to do so, and we should not, nor do we need to harvest what little remains of old-growth individual trees, groves, or forests.
- The funds for schools and counties historically generated by the timber severance tax from O & C lands should be replaced with other sources of funding. The proposed solution is short-term, and we need to think in the long term. I taught at Alsea High School for over 30 years, so I deeply understand the role these revenues have played. Things must change, however, in light of new information and understandings.
- Considering the provisions of the current proposal, citing “an opportunity to coordinate new recovery plans and critical habitat designations” seems like a euphemism for loosening current restrictions such as the decreased buffer zone. I fundamentally disagree with this approach because much evidence points to harmful short and long-term effects on the health of our forests, animal populations, the overall environment, and the economy.
- Opening new areas for timber harvest does not necessarily mean new jobs for a local economy. In fact, much or even most of the acreage clear cut in recent years in the Alsea area has not translated into local jobs at all, and frequently the companies that profit are not even Oregon-based.

I am wholeheartedly in favor of sustainable timber harvest of existing plantations. I value the important role of logging in our state and local economies, I love to buy wood products, and I have the utmost respect for people who make their living in the woods. I personally know and respect the hard-working families who rely on the timber industry to make their living. I just believe that we have learned enough to manage our forests sustainably now, without the need to cut what little remains of old-growth trees on public lands. Cutting old-growth on these lands that belong to all of us would constitute an irreversible error.

We really all know now that it takes hundreds of years for a true, diverse forest to grow. We have harvested more than enough of our original forests, and we should leave what little is left for future generations of people and for the long-term health of both our local ecosystems and the planet. Part of the most meaningful heritage for our grandchildren and their grandchildren should be the wonder and richness of these original forests.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the WOPR. I hope you will reconsider managing BLM lands in a way that is more forward-thinking, rather than in a way that seems to consider only short-term benefits to a relatively small number of people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie Hill".

Bonnie Hill