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These are my official comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Western Oregon Plan Revisions.

The DEIS is fundamentally flawed and should be reworked to protect native forests, wildlife and watersheds. Rural communities are at an economic crossroads – the boom and bust roller coaster of old-growth logging is not the way to ensure long-term stability and vitality.

Instead of increasing old-growth logging, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) should focus on science-based restoration of previously logged landscapes. Doing so will not only improve forest health, but also provide jobs and a steady flow of wood as a by-product. This is the best way to meet the social and economic objectives of the O&C Act.

These public forests are popular lands for recreation. The dollars generated by recreation on public lands is far greater than that of subsidized logging. BLM should not do anything to erode this growing, sustainable source of income for communities.

Communities also depend on BLM lands as watersheds for drinking water and fish habitat. If these watersheds are not protected, drinking water supplies could be polluted or interrupted and wild salmon and trout could suffer. As communities grow and development spreads, clean water will become more and more valuable to healthy economies.

Natural forests also support a quality of life that fuels economic growth in Oregon. More logging on BLM lands degrade the quality of life for residents of local communities in a host of ways – from ruining recreation resources and increasing fire risk to spoiling viewsheds and reducing property values.

The DEIS proposes stripping BLM forestland from the protections of the Northwest Forest Plan. The BLM cannot withdraw from the Northwest Forest Plan without undermining the whole thing. This may trigger a legal train-wreck could lead to less logging on neighboring lands – including National Forest and private timberlands.

Instead of stepping into the future, BLM is falling backward and repeating mistakes of the past. New economic realities need a new approach – not more subsidized logging of old-growth forests. BLM should scrap the DEIS and craft a new plan that protects forests, clean water, wildlife, and the long-term health of rural communities.

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