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Bureau of Land Management
Western Oregon Plan Revisions Office
333 SW 1st. Ave, Portland, OR 97208

Dear BLM:

I'm writing to let you know that I'm very disappointed with the policy direction of the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) preferred alternative management plan. As a long time Pacific Northwest resident, I'm deeply saddened to see the BLM taking steps that will likely do nothing more than rekindle the divisive and costly timber wars that I hoped the Northwest Forest Plan had put to rest. I understand that some counties in Oregon (including my own Lane County) are struggling to deal with the steep reductions in federal O&C revenue due the expiration last year of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, but liquidating old-growth reserves to replace the lost income is a short-sighted and self-destructive strategy.

My understanding is that the WOPR's preferred alternative would result in the cutting of close to half of our state's late-successional reserves over a 10 year period. Considering that over 90% of Oregon's old growth has already been cut, that means less than 5% would be left. That's just astonishing. It seems incredibly risky to reduce old-growth habitat, known to be a great repository of biological diversity, to such a low level. In this era when human activity is pushing species to extinction at a rate greater than any other period in our planets history (except perhaps for a few extraterrestrial impact events), we should be doing everything we can to preserve critical old-growth habitat.

Besides this overarching flaw, the preferred alternative has others worth noting. It calls for the reduction of riparian habitat by 57%. Riparian habitat, although not as endangered as old-growth, is still critically important to a wide range of wildlife, including economically important anadromous fish such as salmon and steelhead. Significantly diminishing stream buffer widths, as called for by the preferred alternative, will put anadromous fish at greater risk and impair the ability of watersheds to absorb flooding and produce clean water.

Another flaw of the plan is that it calls for significantly increasing the acreage of even-aged timber stands that would be more prone to catastrophic fire than the natural forests that they would replace. One potential consequence is that more of the carbon currently sequestered in our forests would end up in the atmosphere. Given the growing concerns over Global Warming, we should be looking for ways to help our forests sequester more carbon, not less.

There is a better way. The BLM has thousands and thousands of acres of already harvested forest land that badly need thinning. Thinning these stands could produce billions of board feet of lumber for timber companies as well as reduce the risk of wildfire. I'm sure the timber industry will claim that profit margins (and hence county payments) would be higher harvesting old-growth, but the great value of intact old-growth stands argues for a compromise that allows the industry to increase its cut but that also preserves the little remaining old-growth we have left. Thinning previously harvested forest lands would be just such a compromise solution.

Sincerely,



Clayton R. Gautier

CC: Senator Ron Wyden, Senator Gordon Smith, Rep. Peter DeFazio