

October 1, 2015

Mr. Jim Peña
Pacific Northwest Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service

Mr. Randy Moore
Pacific Southwest Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service

Mr. Jerome Perez
Oregon/Washington State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Regional Foresters Peña and Moore and Director Perez:

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, are eager to work with you as you revise the land and resource management plans for the 19 national forests and seven Bureau of Land Management districts within the Northwest Forest Plan area. Like you, we are committed to maintaining the principles of the Northwest Forest Plan to protect and enhance habitat for mature and old-growth dependent species and to restore and maintain the ecological integrity of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems.

As you develop a process for revising the 19 national forest management plans, it is essential that you uphold the regional framework of the Northwest Forest Plan. When it was developed 20 years ago, the Plan adopted the first truly landscape-scale approach to federal public land management by creating standards and guidelines to be consistently applied throughout the 24.6-million-acre region. It is the first and only forest plan in the northern spotted owl range deemed legally sufficient by the courts.

While it is premature to judge the efficacy of a 100-year plan after just two decades of implementation, scientific assessments and monitoring have shown that the Plan is achieving many of its ecosystem management goals. The Plan's implementation has yielded tremendous benefits to watersheds, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat. Further, the Northwest Forest Plan has encouraged dialogue on forestry and restoration issues between diverse stakeholders and is one of the first examples of embracing science in public land management.

Notably, one of the key objectives of the plan is to reduce fragmentation and recreate a functional, interconnected late-successional ecosystem, providing habitat for ESA-listed and at-risk species. To do so requires a consistent framework for ecosystem management and application of complementary coarse- and fine-filter protections across the region.

Thus, we recommend that you review and improve the foundational elements of Northwest Forest Plan – including the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, Reserve System, and Survey and Manage Program – based on its goals, the best available science relevant to the Plan, the 20-year monitoring reports, the forthcoming science synthesis, the recent executive order on climate change, and CEQ guidelines on greenhouse gas emissions from land-use activities. The resulting

Record of Decision from this regional analysis – which would apply to all 19 national forests and relevant BLM districts – would uphold the regional framework of the Northwest Forest Plan by providing a scientifically and legally solid foundation upon which to build individual forest plan revisions. Furthermore, it would save time and resources at the forest level by avoiding duplicate analyses. Individual forest plan revisions would tier to the regional Record of Decision on these issues and retain the flexibility needed to address forest-specific issues.

Thank you for your commitment to upholding the principles of the Northwest Forest Plan. Consistent with the major themes from the Listening Sessions of increased transparency and public engagement in this process, we invite you to engage in further dialogue with us before making final decisions about how to approach the Northwest Forest Plan revision process and subsequent Forest Plan updates. We look forward to working with you to uphold the Plan’s regional framework through the land management plan revision process and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

The Wilderness Society

Bark

Western Environmental Law Center

Cascadia Wildlands

Gifford Pinchot Task Force

American Whitewater

American Bird Conservancy

Conservation Northwest

Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

Environmental Protection Information Center

Washington Wild

Oregon Wild

Friends of the Kalmiopsis

WildEarth Guardians

Olympic Park Associates

National Parks Conservation Association

Olympic Forest Coalition

Sierra Club

Umpqua Watersheds, Inc.

Earthjustice

Defenders of Wildlife

Pacific Rivers

Pilchuck Audubon Society

Geos Institute

Northcoast Environmental Center

The Mountaineers

Klamath Forest Alliance

Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

Native Fish Society

Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment

American Rivers

Alpine Lakes Protection Society

Skagit Audubon Society

Endangered Species Coalition

Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship

Audubon Society of Portland

North Cascades Conservation Council