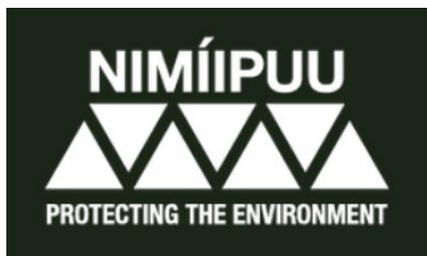
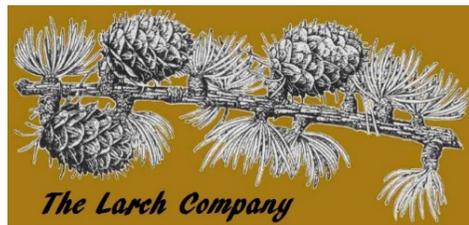


Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
P.O. Box 512 • Ashland, Oregon 97520



January 13, 2021

RE: [Trump Administration Rollback of Protections for Old Growth in the Pacific Northwest](#).

Dear USDA Transition Team,

On behalf of our 33 groups and millions of members across America, we are writing to request the Biden administration stop the amendment to a rule known as the Eastside Screens which protects large trees and old growth in national forests of Eastern Oregon and Washington.

The Trump administration is pursuing its anti-participation, anti-science agenda by fast-tracking a rule change that would allow logging of carbon-rich trees across more than 9 million acres based on the false premise that it won't have significant environmental impacts. We ask that the Biden administration stop this effort immediately, and tell the US Forest Service that any management changes that affect old forests have to prioritize carbon storage and biodiversity, and if they affect National Forests on anything approaching this scale, they must have the benefit of a full and public Environmental Impact Statement process.

This proposal has been opposed by dozens of conservation organizations, over one hundred independent scientists, and a number of notable people including retired Deputy Chief of the USFS Jim Furnish. We know that not only is a much more robust public process needed, but so are *stronger* protections for wildlife and the climate. Tribes have also raised concerns independently.

- **Old Growth Logging Undermines Climate Goals** - New science shows large trees in these landscapes play a disproportionately large role in storing carbon. Large trees also tend to be resilient to climate-driven disturbance like fire. Over 100 scientists have said this amendment will worsen the climate crisis.
- **The Public Process Has Been Novel, Rushed, and Unfair** - During the pandemic, the Trump administration has rushed this process over the objections of conservationists, independent scientists, tribes, and others with a novel process that included skipping scoping entirely. This appears to be the result of political pressure from the highest levels.
- **Old Growth Logging Threatens Wildlife and Biodiversity** - The Screens were intended to protect old-growth dependent wildlife. This proposal removes and weakens important protections for wildlife with very limited analysis, and no species-specific analysis.
- **This Process is Undermining Public Trust** - This process has damaged the credibility of the USFS and forest collaboratives. The Screens provided a framework within which great progress was made. Weakening protections for large trees and old growth will undo decades of effort to find common ground.
- **The USFS Failed to Consider Alternatives with Broad Support** - The Screens were adopted as a placeholder until more comprehensive ecosystem protections could be put into place. Many groups are open to addressing the Screens in a comprehensive manner guided by science where all stakeholders have meaningful input. The current proposal simply makes it easier to log big and old trees and makes it more difficult to find common ground in the future.

In recent months we have seen proposals on the ground that clearly demonstrate this amendment would result in controversial, destructive, and widespread logging of large and old trees across the region. That is why every place-based conservation group working in Eastern Oregon is a signatory to this letter.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. It's hard to overstate the consequential nature of this proposal on the diverse forests in Eastern Oregon or the damage it would do to public trust in the USFS. We look forward to working with the new administration to avoid controversy and conflict, or - worse yet - irreversible damage to our public lands and the fight against the climate crisis. The current ill-considered effort to amend the Screens must be stopped and reversed.

Sincerely,



Sean Stevens
Executive Director
Oregon Wild



Paula Hood
Co-Director
Blue Mountain Biodiversity Project



Darilyn Parry Brown
Executive Director
Greater Hells Canyon Council



Wally Sykes
Founder
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems



Kirin Kennedy
Deputy Legislative Director
Sierra Club



Ben Gordon
Executive Director
Central Oregon LandWatch



Niel Lawrence
Senior Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council



Nick Cady
Legal Director
Cascadia Wildlands



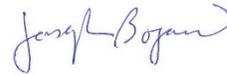
Mike Denny
Conservation Chair
Blue Mountain Audubon



Dave Willis
Chair
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council



Paul Ruprecht
Nevada-Oregon Director
Western Watersheds Project



Joseph Bogaard
Executive Director
Save Our Wild Salmon



Sarah McMillan
Conservation Director
WildEarth Guardians



Marilyn Miller
Owner
Miller Conservation Consulting



Mark Salvo
Program Director
Oregon Natural Desert Association



Gary MacFarlane
Ecosystem Defense Director
Friends of the Clearwater



Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director
Environment Oregon



Tim Coleman
Executive Director
Kettle Range Conservation Group



Felice Kelly
Forest Defense Co-Leader
350PDX



Randi Spivak
Public Lands Program Director
Center for Biological Diversity



Dominick DellaSala, Ph. D
Chief Scientist
Wild Heritage



Joanne Richter
Co-Leader
Central Oregon Bitterbrush Broads
Great Old Broads for Wilderness



Diane Hodiak
Executive Director
350Deschutes



Andy Kerr
Czar
The Larch Company



Greg Costello
Conservation Director
Wildlands Network



Bob Sallinger
Conservation Director
Portland Audubon



Doug Moore
Executive Director
OLCV



Steve Holmer
Vice President of Policy
American Bird Conservancy



Julian Matthews
Coordinator/Board Member
Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment



Tom Uniack
Executive Director
Washington Wild



Damon Motz-Storey
Healthy Climate Program Director
Or. Physicians for Social Responsibility



Greg Haller
Executive Director
Pacific Rivers



Brenna Bell
Staff Attorney/NEPA Coordinator
Bark