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Mr. Jim Peña
Regional Forester
United States Forest Service, Region 6
P.O. Box 3623
Portland, OR 97204-3440

Dear Regional Forester Peña,

I write to express my strong concerns with Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Blue Mountains Forest Plan revision and respectfully ask that you engage directly with the local communities to craft a plan that meets both the needs of the community and the National Forests governed under this plan.

The federally managed forests that span throughout eastern Oregon provide significant economic and cultural benefits to local communities. In addition to the economic value these forests hold, accessing and utilizing these lands is a way of life for area residents. However, these forests are in poor condition and dire need of proper management that will restore forest health, reduce catastrophic wildfire, and sustain the economies in these rural communities.

Unfortunately, it seems that this plan falls short of meeting these needs of the forest and the communities. For example, while the plan does aim to increase timber harvest, at best it only provides roughly 30% of the timber needed from these forests to sustain the forest products manufacturing infrastructure in the area and by allowing for annual active management on just 1.9% of the total forest landscape, it will fall short of restoring the health of the forests.

Over the past year, communities surrounded by the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests have expressed deep concerns with the direction of this plan. At all of my recent town halls and other public meetings in these communities, I heard from a variety of constituents and local elected officials who have found that this plan not only fails to meet the needs of their communities, but also fails to achieve the desired conditions for the forest as well.

As the Forest Service assesses the comments and input provided on the DEIS, I hope that you will reassess the proposal and engage with these local communities to develop a plan that accurately reflects existing forest conditions and outlines objectives that will reach the needed environmental and economic outcomes. I look forward to having you join me on the ground in Eastern Oregon to discuss this plan and other issues on our National Forests that so greatly impact Oregon's rural communities.

Sincerely,

Greg Walden
Member of Congress