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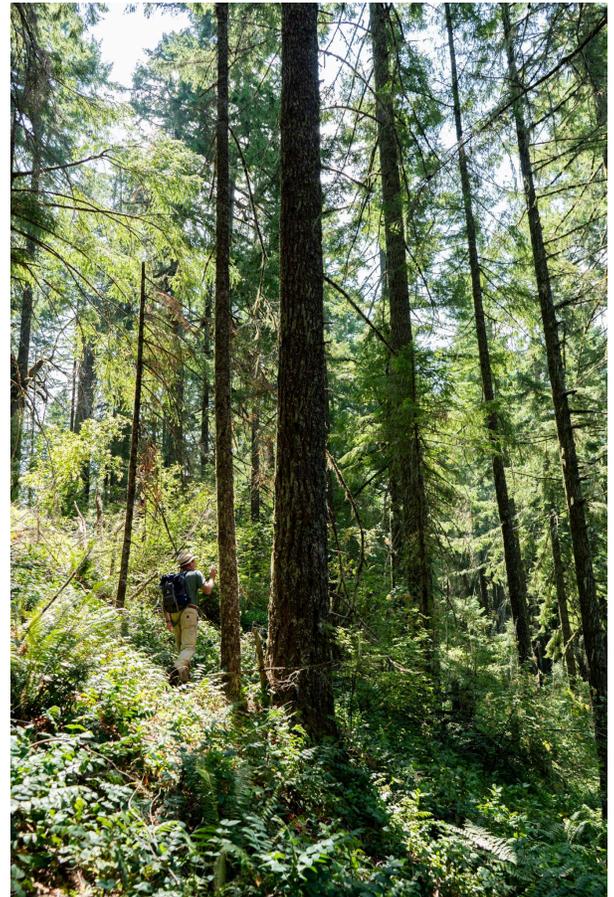
November 25th, 2024

Dear Government Officials,

We are writing today to urge you to follow through on your commitment to protect old-growth forests and cancel the [Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\)'s Blue and Gold Harvest Plan](#), located west of Yoncalla, Oregon in the Umpqua River watershed. This timber sale project targets some of the last fragments of unlogged, mature and old-growth carbon-storing forests in the region. This egregious plan would log and build roads through over 3,400 acres of public forests that currently provide large-scale carbon storage, clean water, and habitat for Endangered Species Act listed species including the marbled murrelet, coho salmon, and northern spotted owl.

The Blue and Gold project in Oregon's Coast Range directly contradicts Biden administration directives. President Biden's 2022 Earth Day [Executive Order 14072](#) on Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities and Local Economies directed federal agencies—including the Bureau of Land Management—to "safeguard mature and old-growth forests on federal lands." BLM is likewise failing to follow its own Public Lands Rule, which established a policy to conserve intact landscapes in response to the President's order.

Recent in-depth investigative reporting from Oregon Public Broadcasting and ProPublica revealed the agency's failure to adhere to the President's directive in a piece titled "[Despite Biden's promise to protect old forests, his administration keeps approving plans to cut them down.](#)"¹ In the report, a former employee of the BLM details the difference between what the BLM puts in its planning documents and what the reality is on the ground, pointing to an old-growth forest with trees he estimates to be up to 600 hundred years old in a stand the BLM classifies as only 90.



BLM released a draft environmental assessment for the project in April 2022, just five days after President's Biden's order to conserve old-growth, then quickly put the project on hold citing a need for internal review. On September 13th, 2024, the agency rushed through a review and

¹ April Ehrlich, McKenzie Funk, Tony Schick, *Despite Biden's promise to protect old forests, his administration keeps approving plans to cut them down* (November 13, 2024)
<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/11/12/biden-logging-forests-blm-oregon-climate/>

signed off on this terrible project a mere three weeks after the public comment period ended on August 20, 2024. Two timber sales have been sold out of the project so far.

Oregon Coast Range forests, like the landscapes put at risk by this ill-advised project, are some of the most carbon-dense in the world, with the potential to sequester more carbon on an ongoing basis than almost any other ecosystem on Earth. Removing carbon from the forest in the form of large logs not only releases most of what was stored, but also prevents those trees from continuing to take carbon from the atmosphere. It would take decades for the remaining thinned or replanted forests to reach that capacity again – decades we do not have if we are going to mitigate the worst impacts of climate instability.



The BLM should only develop projects that do real restoration work in younger plantations and poorly functioning riparian zones while limiting commercial logging to young, dense harvest land base stands that are under 80 years old. BLM should not be moving forward with projects that will raise fire risk for surrounding communities for many decades. No scientific justification exists for logging our last remaining mature and old-growth forests.

We urge you to hold the BLM accountable to the millions of Oregonians who rely on public forest lands for clean drinking water, recreational opportunities, and the carbon sequestration provided by these rare old-growth forests. The agency must consider the best available science to analyze all environmental impacts, and refrain from downgrading or removing habitat for old-growth dependent species. The Blue and Gold project is precisely the type of climate and wildfire unconscious activity on public lands that President Biden's executive order and the resulting processes and rulemakings were supposed to prevent, yet the agency is rushing through with the project despite years of sustained local and regional opposition. Live up to your commitments to old-growth forest conservation: cancel the Blue and Gold project before the end of the administration. These forests are worth more standing.

Sincerely,

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Phil Carver
350 Salem Oregon

Brenna Bell
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Madeline Cowen
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Sonia Demiray
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Partnership for Policy Integrity

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Protect Our Woods

Michael Kellett
RESTORE: The North Woods

Larry Glass
SAFE Alternatives for our Forest Environment

Anna Medema

Sierra Club

Dave Willis
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

Liza Crosse
The Siskiyou Crest Coalition

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Mary Campbell
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