

President Joe Biden  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
U.S. Secretary of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning  
Director, Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Nada Culver  
Principal Deputy Director, Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Stephennne Harding  
Senior Director for Lands, White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)  
730 Jackson Place  
Washington D.C.

Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator, Oregon  
405 E Eighth Ave, Unit 2020,  
Eugene, OR 97401, United States

Jeff Merkley  
U.S. Senator, Oregon  
405 E Eighth Ave, Unit 2010,  
Eugene, OR 97401, United States

Val Hoyle  
U.S. Representative, Oregon  
940 Willamette St  
Eugene, OR 97401, United States

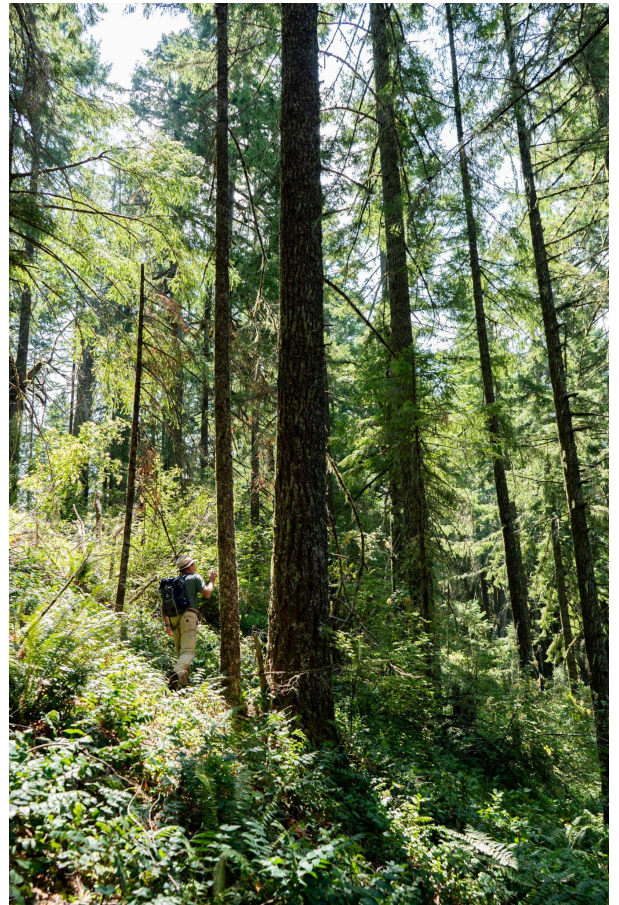
November 25th, 2024

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.](#)"<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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,

Patricia Hine  
350 Eugene

Phil Carver  
350 Salem Oregon

Brenna Bell  
350PDX

Jordan Latter  
Bark

Sally Keely  
Cascadia Climate Action Now

Madeline Cowen  
Cascadia Wildlands

Randi Spivak  
Center for Biological Diversity

Nicole Hayler  
Chattooga Conservancy

Tammy Domike  
Citizens for a Clean Harbor

Sonia Demiray  
Climate Communications Coalition

Kate Gessert  
Climate Writers

Michael Gaskill  
Coast Range Association

Ellen Montgomery  
Environment America

Josefina Barrantes  
EPIC (Environmental Protection Information Center)

Paul Hughs  
Forests Forever

Jeff Juel  
Friends of the Clearwater

Patricia Mutchnick  
Heart of the Gila

David Nickell  
Heartwood

Ron Hess  
Interfaith Earthkeepers

Kimberly Baker  
Klamath Forest Alliance

George Sexton  
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center

Rene Voss  
Natural Resources Law

Sable Odry  
Northcoast Environmental Center

Sarah Adloo  
Old-Growth Forest Network

Lauren Anderson  
Oregon Wild

Laura Haight  
Partnership for Policy Integrity

Andy Mahler  
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

JJ Lindsey

Thurston Climate Action

Kasey Hovik

Umpqua Watersheds

Kaia Africanis

Wild Heritage, a Project of Earth Island Institute

Rya Talbott

WildEarth Guardians

Deborah Giles

Wild Orca

Mary Campbell

Yaak Valley Forest Council