



## Great Northwest Forests



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### Proposal Questions

#### Mission/History Of Organization

MVCC's mission is to raise a strong community voice for protection of the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character. Founded in 1976, the Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) has a distinguished 40+year history of

#### JEDI Efforts and Impact

After participating in the Community Foundation of North Central Washington's "Learning to People Together Better" - a 9-month discussion and skills-building series to improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), we

advocating for progressive land use and environmental values in the bucolic Methow Valley. In 2019, we led the Methow Headwaters campaign (supported by Conservation Alliance) which led to protection of over 340,000 acres from industrial mining in the upper Methow Watershed. The healthy rural character of this community, with low-density development, considerable open space, and clean air and water, has been preserved in a significant part through our advocacy on land use planning and public land issues. Today, MVCC is the Methow's 'go-to' advocacy organization, lending a collaborative and credible voice from rural eastern Washington.

developed a DEI plan for our organization. Our staff holds monthly DEI lunch meetings, and our board has a standing agenda item dedicated to tribal learning. The staff reviews our annual program goals they are aligned with our DEI-related program goals. We frequently partner with the Indigenous and Latinx communities in our work, we have also three tribal members into leadership positions on our boards. We hold many outreach meetings to connect with organizations and community members underrepresented in environmental issues, including members of the Colville Confederated Tribes, Yakama Nation, local indigenous youth, health practitioners at Family Health Centers, Progreso Latino, and the Commission for Hispanic Affairs.

**Final Success** Working through an effective, efficient regional coalition, we are working to secure a climate smart amendment under the NW Forest Plan for 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in western Oregon, Washington, and northwestern California.

**Location Details**

The Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) is a comprehensive strategy for managing federal lands in the Pacific Northwest, aimed at protecting old-growth forests and the species that depend on them, while also supporting social and economic sustainability. The NWFP covers approximately 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands across western Oregon, Washington, and northwestern California

The plan encompasses 17 National Forests, 7 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Districts, and 6 National Parks. Some of the notable forests included are:

- Olympic National Forest (Washington)
- Mount Hood National Forest (Oregon)
- Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (Oregon/California)
- Klamath National Forest (California)
- Shasta-Trinity National Forest (California)

The NWFP region is characterized by its diverse ecosystems, ranging from coastal rainforests to mountainous terrains. Key features include:

- Old-Growth Forests: These forests are home to ancient trees, some over 200 years old, providing critical habitat for species like the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet.
- Aquatic Ecosystems: The plan includes an aquatic conservation strategy to protect rivers, streams, and wetlands, ensuring healthy habitats for fish and other aquatic species.
- Biodiversity: The region supports a wide variety of plant and animal species, many of which are rare or endangered.

The NWFP also integrates land use categories and management guidelines to balance conservation efforts with sustainable resource use. This includes timber harvesting, recreation, and other activities that contribute to the local

**Biodiversity in Project Area**

The Pacific Northwest region of the United States is home to some of the most biodiverse and carbon-dense forests outside the tropics. These forests are crucial to carbon sequestration and play a vital role in climate resiliency and biodiversity.

Old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest are particularly important for climate action. They are carbon sinks that absorb and store large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The forests' carbon sequestration capacity is due to the presence of large trees that store carbon in their biomass and soil. These trees also provide habitat for a wide range of species, including threatened and endangered ones. The forests' biodiversity is further enhanced by the presence of lichens, mosses, and other flora and fauna that thrive in the clean air of the region.

However, the Pacific Northwest forests are under threat from climate change. Iconic tree species such as the red cedar, known as the "Tree of Life," are dying due to climate-induced drought. The forests' vulnerability to climate change is further exacerbated by human activities such as logging, road-building, and fire suppression.

To mitigate the effects of climate change on Pacific Northwest forests, the Forest Service launched an update of the NW Forest Plan to improve forest resiliency and protect mature and old-growth forests on federal lands in the Pacific Northwest in 2023. In 2025, the Forest Service under the Trump Administration is continuing with the process of the update.

The Northwest Forest Plan is a landscape approach to federal land management designed to protect at-risk species while also contributing to social and economic sustainability in the Pacific Northwest. It was intended to provide an ecosystem approach to forest management approach to federal lands that is scientifically credible, socially responsible, and legally sound. Since its adoption in 1994, climate change and other developments have prompted the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to now pursue a modernization of the Plan. Such measures would help meet U.S. carbon-reduction goals by 2030.

**Strategy & Timeline For Final Success**

The Forest Service began the amendment process for the Northwest Forest Plan in 2023. The need to change the Plan was informed by public roundtable discussions in 2017, a

**Expected Economic & Recreational Impact**

economy while preserving ecological integrity.

Updating the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) will have significant impacts on local economies and recreation in the region. The NWFP amendment aims to balance conservation needs with predictable timber harvests, which can support local economies by providing jobs and resources. The outdoor recreation economy is an even great to the region's economy, generating over \$26 billion annually in Washington alone. Outdoor recreation is the primary way the public interacts with these lands. An effective update the the NW Forest Plan is key to ensuring both conservation of resources and opportunities for recreation. The plan considers the impact of climate change, including more frequent wildfires, which can lead to longer closures of recreational areas. Recommendations include restoring and reopening recreation sites after climate-related events to ensure continued public access. Overall, the update to the NWFP is expected to support sustainable economic growth, enhance recreational opportunities, and address environmental challenges, ensuring that the forests remain accessible and enjoyable for future generations.

**Key Decision Makers**

The key decisionmakers for the NW Forest Plan Amendment include high-level staff at the USDA Forest Service, BLM, and the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. We are in direct contact with

Science Synthesis in 2018, and a Bioregional Assessment in 2020. The Forest Service also appointed a 22-member Federal Advisory Committee to provide consensus advice on three key topics: wildfire resilience, mature and old growth forest conservation, and centering Indigenous priorities in land management.

In 2024, the Federal Advisory Committee delivered recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and Chief of the Forest Service which included over 100 provisions that elevate Tribal co-stewardship of national forestlands and dozens that seek to conserve the remaining old growth forests while also providing for their recruitment over time. Steps to address climate change and wildfire risk are woven throughout the recommendations, as is the need to build a local restoration workforce to steward these forests for present and future generations.

The Forest Service released a draft environmental impact statement analyzing the environmental consequences of the amendment (built off the FACA recommendations) in November 2024 and plans to release a final environmental impact statement and draft Record of Decision in 2025. The decision to amend the Plan will be subject to administrative review prior to implementation. The public was invited to comment on the draft environmental impact statement until March 17, 2025, and will later be able to file administrative objections to the proposed amendment.

Thanks to past support from the Conservation Alliance, the process has been informed by robust engagement with stakeholders across all affected geographies to address urgent land management concerns including wildfire resilience, climate change adaptation, and greater tribal inclusion in the plan.

An effective group of organizations with a deep history with the NWFP have been working together for six years in preparation for this moment. These groups are: Methow Valley Citizens Council (WA), The Wilderness Society (regional), Sierra Club (regional), Conservation NW (WA), Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (OR/CA), and Cascade Forest Conservancy (WA/OR). Now that the Forest Service has proposed an amendment and the FACA process has concluded, our campaign has three primary objectives during 2025: (1) engage rural organizers in each state (Oregon, Washington, and California) to show community support and elevate tribal engagement; (2) build robust bipartisan support among the Congressional delegation to ensure a

policy leads in Washington DC working on the revision process and meet with them regularly. Ultimately, the Trump Administration will have the final say, but support from congressional leaders will be important as well. We organize regular congressional briefings for staff of the legislators in the geography of the NW Forest Plan.

Two of our coalition partners, Mike Anderson (representing the Wilderness Society) and Susan Jane Brown (independent attorney working with our coalition) held seats on the Federal Advisory Committee (FACA) that guided the Forest Plan revision process. The FACA committee had a diverse array of representation that included scientists, conservationists, tribal members, industry representatives, recreation, and others. Susan Jane in her role as co-chair built important relationships with timber industry representatives (The president of the American Forest Resource Council was the other co-chair) as well as tribes - both key for ensuring that the consensus recommendation of the FACA committee is honored.

The FACA committee convened by the agencies will have a big influence on these decision-makers. The consensus built through the FACA committee recommendations and the outpouring of public support for a climate smart forest plan amendment sets a strong scientifically supported agreement which broad consensus for the next phase of the NW Forest Plan.

sound amendment process; and (3) run an earned and digital media campaign that demonstrates immense public support and love for public forests and rivers.

Strategic Objective 1: Employ rural organizers in each state to demonstrate broad and diverse support across the region post comment-period in 2025. We will be strategic in our approach to 'lead with the community voice' and demonstrate support from rural communities for climate-smart strategies to protect Northwest forests. We will work with tribal leaders, business leaders, and community members to raise a strong and unified voice for safeguarding the ecological values of these public lands. A broad and diverse support base will also help us secure strong bipartisan support from locally elected leaders.

Strategic Objective 2: Work with our congressional delegation to ensure a strong legal and scientific foundation around the revision effort. We will use science-based principles for forest management as the framework for our call to action and advocacy during the Plan Revision process. We will work with top regional scientists and members of the FACA committee, including the timber industry, to advocate for scientifically sound recommendations for the NW Forest Plan.

Strategic Objective 3: While a strong scientific framework is critical to our success, winning people's hearts and minds is equally important. Over the last 5 years, visitation to our public lands has grown exponentially. During this time, our campaign has built outreach and communications tools including a website, social media site, and a compelling video series. These tools helped us reach a new cadre of hikers and recreationists that emerged after the pandemic and engage them in protecting their cherished public lands. In summer 2025 and throughout the year, we will continue to use these tools to elevate the community voice for protecting old and mature forests in the face of climate change. Community organizers will work with media consultants to strategically place op-eds and letters to the editor in support of science-based improvements to the NW Forest Plan. The Forest Service's timeline aims to complete the process by the end of the year.

**Elevate Voices**

MVCC's work is on the ancestral, unceded lands of the Methow and Sylix People, constituent tribes of the Colville Confederated Tribes, who have lived in what is now called the Methow River and Okanogan Valleys from time immemorial.

**Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

1. A decision by the end of 2025 for a climate-smart Forest Plan amendment that protects mature and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest.
2. At least 25 high profile rural and tribal community members are speaking out in



MVCC is committed to toward strengthening relationships with tribal citizens of the Colville Confederated Tribes to protect and restore the land, air, and water on which we all depend, as well as supporting the tribe in asserting tribal sovereignty in their traditional territory. Our vice chair, John Sirois is the Traditional Territories Advisor for the Colville Tribes and has been helping us grow as an organization to be better allies for the indigenous community. We have also provided significant support to youth tribal leadership to engage in water protection issues, providing funding and mentorship.

Through the FACA committee, our coalition has worked with tribal members to develop a set of new tribal standards and guidelines to include in the Forest Plan Amendment. These have broad support on the committee and are powerful new additions to the NW Forest Plan which are included in the Forest Service's proposed update to the NW Forest Plan. Additionally, many of the local, rural organizations in our coalition have spent the last few years forming relationships with a diverse array of organizations representing new voices working on forest issues, representing historically underrepresented groups (especially among the Latinx and tribal communities). We have invited these groups to join the various forums we engage in, such as forest collaboratives, and we share our comment guides and forest reports so that there is better sharing of information and access to public comment opportunities for agency projects and processes. Additionally, this website was created as a resources for tribes and tribal members to engage in the NW Forest Plan: <https://www.nwfp-tribal-hub.org/>

favor of climate-smart amendments to the NW Forest Plan through an impactful earned media presence. The campaign will use the dossier we have built over the last five years that contains information about community leaders, views on forest management and the Forest Service (for example), identifying spokespeople, etc.

3. Majority bipartisan support from the NW Congressional delegation for moving ahead with a climate-smart amendment to the NW Forest Plan.

#### **TCA Funding Plan**

Funding from the Conservation Alliance will be administered by Methow Valley Citizens Council for the benefit of the whole coalition. We will use Conservation Alliance funds to support the salaries and expenses of rural organizers who will be engaging community outreach to demonstrate strong rural support of a climate-smart Forest Plan amendment. We will also use funds to organize a science forum for the public to cement the case for protecting mature and old-growth trees as part of a climate strategy for Northwest forests, as well as other strategies such prescribed burning in drier forest types. Lastly, we will use funds to convene a couple in-person strategy sessions for our coalition over the course of the year. Given the broad geography, in-person meetings are important but can be costly, so providing

#### **How long it took to complete application**

some assistance to smaller groups will ensure full participation.

**Confidential Items** No.

**Other Relevant Application Details**

While we are confident in our strategy, and the strength of our relationships and public support, these are unprecedented times for our public lands and we cannot anticipate how things might change 6 months from now. We are committed to working closely with the Conservation Alliance as the strategy evolves and there are new developments. Thank you for your support of our vision and campaign.

