



February 2, 2024

Director
Ecosystem Management Coordination
201 14th Street S.W.
Mailstop 1108
Washington, DC 20250-1124

Dear Director,

The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) submits the following comments regarding the United States Forest Service proposal to amend all forest plans to include consistent direction to conserve and steward existing and recruit future old-growth forest conditions.

CDA's mission is to strengthen and advance Colorado agriculture; promote a safe, high quality, and sustainable food supply; protect consumers; and foster responsible stewardship of the environment and natural resources. It is with this mission in mind that CDA offers scoping comments to this effort and formally requests cooperating agency status for this analysis.

Old-growth or late successional stage forest stands are an important component of National Forest System lands. As stated in the notice, there are approximately 2,700 land management components in existing forest plans that provide direction on management, conservation, or monitoring of old-growth forest conditions. These components were developed at the local level and are specific to the forests for which they were written. CDA questions whether components developed at the national level will better serve local resource concerns and desired conditions. Steps should be taken to ensure that this planning effort does not divert limited resources away from other planning efforts or activities on forest units that have already adequately addressed old-growth forest conditions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this scoping notice. National Forests are incredibly important to multiple sectors of the economy and culture in Colorado. Proper use and management of resources is paramount. CDA reiterates our request for cooperating agency status and looks forward to participating in this effort. I will serve as the main point of contact for CDA's involvement. Please contact me at les.owen@state.co.us or 303-869-9032 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'L. Owen'.

Les Owen
Conservation Services Division Director

