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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland,

I am writing in support of President Biden's Executive Order on Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies. The remaining mature and old-growth forests and trees are one of the simplest and most cost-effective climate policies the U.S. can deploy at scale. Communities throughout California and the Pacific Northwest (PNW) are threatened by climate-driven wildfires. By protecting our oldest, biggest trees that are most resistant to wildfire, we are also ensuring community safety and protection. It is critical that you fulfill the President's directive to provide lasting protections for these trees.

We live with fire here in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. It has been five scary years now since the Tubbs fire ravaged Sonoma County. We live with "smoke season" and in fear on hot red flag days. We no longer turn our cell phones off at night for fear of missing emergency alerts to get up and get out in the middle of the night. We know too many people who have run for their lives with nothing and lost everything.

Keeping our mature and old growth trees standing sequesters carbon and protects landscapes. Watching the timber salvage that has taken place after local fires is tragic. We watch perfectly good trees being harvested as "salvage." Making it only worse when the next fire comes through.

Walking in the old growth Henry Woods grove of redwoods in Philo Ca you feel the strength and majesty of these trees. They are many 100s of years old and most are marred by burn marks. But the hundreds of feet tall trees are strong as ever because they are fire resilient! A perfect model species in this changing landscape.

Climate change is at our door. No one can deny and it is not a forecast...it is happening in real time before our eyes.

While EO 14072 correctly enumerates the many threats that climate change-enhanced drought and disturbances pose to mature and old-growth forests, it erroneously fails to include on-going logging as a threat to older federal forests and trees. There are numerous logging projects across the PNW that target mature and old-growth trees that underscore this point. These forests collectively contain the bulk of the carbon already stored in federal forests and they continue to sequester carbon at high rates. If continued logging of these trees is allowed, the vital role they play in the fight against climate change will be eliminated.

I urge the USDA and DOI to work together to create durable policies based on a definition of mature forests and trees of 80 years, to permanently end the avoidable loss of their critically important carbon, water and wildlife values to logging.

ATTACHMENT: The attached photo is our former home surrounded by the Walbridge fire. We were lucky to have survived and have since sold our family home. Gone are the memories of 20 years raising our children in this special place. KEEP THE BIG TREES. They protect us all, create beauty and habitat.