

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/29/2024 5:00:00 AM

First name: Thomas

Last name: Hirasuna

Organization: Finger Lakes Greater Region NY Chapter, The Climate Reality Project

Title: Co-Chair

Comments: Dear Chief Moore,

On behalf of the members of the Finger Lakes Greater Region NY Chapter of The Climate Reality Project, we thank you for your commitment to protecting our old-growth forests. We would also urge you to include stronger provisions to protect old-growth as well as mature forests in the Land Management Plan Direction for Old-Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System #65356.

Our older forests are critical to maintaining biodiversity and storing and sequestering carbon on federal lands, and thus, to help meet the US's climate commitments. The area remaining in old-growth forest is very limited; mature forests, upon protection, will become old-growth forests and add many of the same climate and biodiversity benefits. Thus, we urge you to include mature forests in conservation planning. In the Eastern US where nearly all old-growth forests have been logged, mature forests are especially important.

Specifically, we urge the Forest Service to: (1) stop felling of old-growth trees everywhere and other cutting in old-growth where fire risk is low; (2) remove the Tongass old-growth logging exception; (3) consider alternatives for conserving the values of mature forests, including their value as future old-growth; and (4) include rigorous monitoring of the extent and carbon storage/sequestration value of old-growth and mature forests.

Thank you for considering our feedback on this important effort. Given the critical role mature and old-growth forests play in fighting the climate crises and biodiversity loss, it is essential that America establish the strongest possible safeguards for their conservation. We encourage the Forest Service to maintain its timeline for this amendment process, and robustly engage with Tribal Nations, the public, and other stakeholders to conserve our nation's forest heritage.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Hirasuna PhD, Co-Chair

The Climate Reality Project, Finger Lakes Greater Region NY Chapter

ATTACHMENT: ChapterLogo_FingerLakes sm.png is organization logo.