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Comments: Please see the attached 18,384 comments from Center for Biological Diversity supporters urging the agency to remove all language in the amendment that would allow old-growth trees and forests to be logged other than in very rare circumstances of imminent risk to public safety \*and\* requesting that the agency use this opportunity to formalize a commitment to protect mature trees - which, if left to grow, will become the old growth of tomorrow.

Thank you for proposing a nationwide plan amendment to address the long-term persistence, distribution and recruitment of old-growth forest across national forest systems. This proactive step will help protect the country's oldest trees [mdash] but to truly safeguard their vital role in mitigating the climate crisis, you must make the amendment significantly stronger. According to the proposed amendment, [ldquo]Vegetation management within old-growth forest conditions may not be for the primary purpose of growing, tending, harvesting, or regeneration of trees for economic reasons.[rdquo] This leaves a significant loophole that would allow old-growth trees to be logged nationwide, undermining the contributions old-growth forests and trees make to climate resiliency and healthy ecosystems. The U.S. Forest Service no longer proposes projects primarily for economic reasons. Its logging projects are now proposed for things like resilience and wildfire mitigation [mdash] yet too often these terms are misused to justify destructive logging and road-building projects. The agency should not sell old-growth trees. Secretary Vilsack, there's a deficit of old-growth trees and forests on federal lands. They should be left standing so they can store carbon, provide ecological integrity, increase biodiversity, improve watershed health, and enhance wildfire resiliency. I urge you to remove all language in the amendment that would allow old-growth trees and forests to be logged other than in \*very rare\* circumstances of imminent risk to public safety. I also request that you use this opportunity to formalize a commitment to protect mature trees [mdash] which, if left to grow, will become the old growth of tomorrow. Also, the protection of all the trees and their inhabitants in our National Forests would be improved with the banning of OHVs in them.

ATTACHMENT: CenterforBiologicalDiversity-ProtectOldGrowthForests-18384Comments.xlsx - Petition with 18,384 names with the above comment.