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Comments: Attached are comments submitted by 19 faith-based organizations through the National Religious Partnership for the Environment via <https://forms.gle/KdM82rWmkrTAqQDi6>.

As religious and faith-based organizations which recognize the sacredness of God's creation and our duty as humans to act as responsible stewards of the Earth, we urge you to establish strong and clear protections for mature and old-growth trees and forests [ndash] stronger yet than those found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement currently under consideration. It is our shared moral obligation to care for and tend the land upon which we dwell, to prioritize human health and safety, and to protect the sacred natural resources we and all our communities depend on for a healthy and abundant life. For these reasons, robust protections for our venerable non-human neighbors are a spiritual and ethical imperative. Old growth and mature trees are particularly vital as they help mitigate the intertwined climate and biodiversity crises with their rich storage of carbon [ndash] as they boost resilience to fires, filter drinking water, and shelter wildlife, in addition to serving numerous fundamental purposes among Indigenous communities and their age-old practices. We commend the Biden Administration and the U.S Forest Service for your shared commitment to protect these forests, and strongly support your efforts to draw on traditional Indigenous knowledge and to implement ecologically-based forest management. However, we are concerned that the current Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for old growth forest protection still leaves these sacred forests vulnerable to overuse and mismanagement. We ask the Forest Service to adopt a modified version of Alternative 3 in its final decision [ndash] providing lasting protections for mature and old-growth forests, and including concrete actions to protect and recover old-growth forests that have been lost over past centuries. The final record of decision should: - End the cutting of old-growth trees in all national forests and all forest types. - End the cutting of any trees in old-growth stands in moist forest types. - End any commercial exchange of old-growth trees; even in the rare circumstances where an old-growth tree is cut (i.e. public safety), that tree should not be sent to the mill. Establish clear protections for mature trees and forests [ndash] the forests which provide the bulk of climate benefits in federal forests, and are themselves future-old growth. Guided by our shared commitment to care for our neighbors and prioritize the most vulnerable, the protection of this land is our communal responsibility. We have a moral imperative to act boldly because the protection of trees and forests on federal land will have a real impact on everyone in our shared world. We must protect these pristine, awe-inspiring, and vulnerable forests for the wellbeing of our planet and future generations. ATTACHMENT Faith Organization Comments_ National Old Growth Amendment DEIS - Sheet1.pdf includes copies of the letter text above and 19 names/signors as well as contact information.