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First name: Benjamin

Last name: Pitterle

Organization: Los Padres Forestwatch

Title: Director of Advocacy and Field Operations

Comments: Dear Chief Moore,

I am writing on behalf of Los Padres ForestWatch to express our strong opposition to the current draft of the National Old Growth Amendment and to deliver written comments from 742 concerned ForestWatch members. Our members have voiced their deep concerns about the potential failure of the proposed amendment to provide meaningful protections for both mature and old-growth forests in the Los Padres National Forest and across the nation. These messages underscore the critical role that old-growth and mature forests play in promoting biodiversity, sequestering carbon, and ensuring long-term ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change.

We believe that the amendment, as currently written, leaves critical loopholes that could allow for increased logging and vegetation management projects under the guise of wildfire mitigation and forest health. These loopholes jeopardize the very protections the amendment is supposed to provide. We urge the Forest Service to strengthen the final version of the amendment by closing these loopholes and ensuring that both old-growth and mature forests are fully protected from commercial logging and other destructive practices.

Our organization, along with countless members of the public, recognizes that these forests are irreplaceable. The ecological value of old-growth forests in particular cannot be overstated—they are crucial for wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and carbon storage. Additionally, mature forests, which will become the old growth of the future, must be safeguarded as part of any comprehensive forest management strategy aimed at addressing the climate and biodiversity crises.

Enclosed with this letter are 742 email messages from ForestWatch supporters, urging the Forest Service to adopt stronger protections for mature and old-growth forests in the final version of the National Old Growth Amendment. We hope that you will take their voices into account as you finalize this important policy.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter. We look forward to seeing meaningful changes that reflect the need to protect our nation's forests for future generations.

Comment letter text:

As someone deeply committed to the preservation of our national forests, I am writing to express my strong support for the protection of mature and old-growth forests.

The Forest Service's proposed Nationwide Forest Plan Amendment is an important opportunity to safeguard

these critical ecosystems. However, I am concerned that the current proposal contains major loopholes that could allow for the continued logging of mature and old-growth trees under the misguided pretense of wildfire mitigation or so-called "forest health". The proposal MUST be dramatically strengthened to provide real protections and prevent ALL logging of old-growth forests.

Mature and old-growth trees are essential not only for their unparalleled carbon sequestration capabilities but also for their role in providing habitat for endangered species, supporting healthy watersheds, and enhancing forest resilience to wildfire. The vast majority of remaining old-growth forest on the Central Coast of California is within the Los Padres National Forest. These forests must be protected from the threat of logging. And while this proposed amendment would only affect old-growth forest, mature forests (which are poised to become old-growth in the coming decades) need to be protected as well.

I urge you to revise the proposed amendment to close these loopholes and ensure that both mature and old-growth trees in the Los Padres National Forest and across the country are truly protected.

Please take decisive action to protect these invaluable resources for current and future generations.

ATTACHMENT: NOGA\_DEIS\_LPFW\_EmailComments\_Sept192024.pdf- includes copies of the form letter text coded above, 742 names/signors and contact information as well as the following Form Plus text

My strong support for the protection of mature and old-growth forests is a long held belief. The Forest Service's proposed Nationwide Forest Plan Amendment contains major loopholes that could allow for the continued logging of mature and old-growth trees. The proposal must be dramatically strengthened to provide real protections and prevent all logging of old-growth forests. I urge you to revise the proposed amendment to close these loopholes and ensure that both mature and old-growth trees in the Los Padres National Forest and across the country are truly protected. As a lifelong hiker and camper I want to express my strong support for the protection of mature and old-growth forests. Mature and old-growth trees under the misguided program of wildfire mitigation or so-called "forest health". This proposal needs to be greatly strengthened to provide real protection and prevent ALL logging of old-growth forests. Mature and old-growth trees are essential not only for their carbon sequestration capabilities but also for their role in providing habitat for endangered species, supporting healthy watersheds, and threat of logging. And while this proposed amendment would only affect old-growth forest, mature forests need to be protected as well. As a lifelong hiker and camper I want to express my strong support for the protection of mature and old-growth forests. Mature and old-growth trees under the misguided program of wildfire mitigation or so-called "forest health". This proposal needs to be greatly strengthened to provide real protection and prevent ALL logging of old-growth forests. Mature and old-growth trees are essential not only for their carbon sequestration capabilities but also for their role in providing habitat for endangered species, supporting healthy watersheds, and threat of logging. And while this proposed amendment would only affect old-growth forest, mature forests need to be protected as well. I welcome updates to the guideline that govern the management of our national forests. However, I am concerned about some loopholes in the proposed rules that are supposed to protect mature and old-growth forests. Mature and old-growth forests should not be subject to logging under the guise of 'fuel reduction' or 'wildfire mitigation'. While removing potential fuel sources seems like it would reduce wildfire risks, it does the opposite. Truly mature and old-growth forests are naturally resilient to devastating wildfires. Logging reduces the canopy coverage and produces more clearings and open areas (including access roads) that increase the temperature and decrease the humidity within forests, which increases the potential for wildfires to start and spread quickly. Logging activities can introduce invasive plant species into forests, which are often weedy and drought-intolerant and thus prone to easily igniting. Finally, logging includes some direct risk of accidental fire ignition by vehicles, equipment, and personnel. Mature and old-growth forests are among our greatest assets in the fight against global climate change and against regionally devastating wildfires. Please revise the sections of the proposed updates that would permit these corporate cash-grabs disguised as care for our national forests. So I'm urging you - no, I'm pleading with you - don't let this moment slip.

away Don't let these loopholes stand Take action now to protect our forests - the ancient sentinels that have stood through millennia of change and turmoil We owe it to them, to ourselves, and to future generations to make sure they remain standing. This isn't just policy - this is survival Let's act like it