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Organization: Heartwood

Title:

Comments: I am a PhD ecologist and live in the Eastern Deciduous forest of southern Indiana.

I support the comments made by Heartwood (see attached file) and by the Indiana Forest Alliance (see below) regarding preserving "Old growth" and "Mature growth" forests in the eastern United State.

1. Eastern Deciduous forests are part of this important plan amendment. They have to be considered as an endangered ecosystem, distinct from forests in the western US.
2. Mature growth must be allowed to grow to old growth status to adhere to President Biden's Executive Order 14072. Mature and old growth stands must be managed differently than younger age classes because of their unique characteristics and importance.
3. All current projects with mature and old growth stands must be paused until amendments can be made to their respective forest plans.
4. The Forest Service must recognize that old growth forests in the eastern US are forests that have not been significantly disturbed by human management for a long time (80 or more years). Such uneven aged natural forests have developed the greatest species diversity and span of tree ages that makes them more resistant to pests and diseases and more resilient to climate change. Their management for old growth conditions should not ignore this fact and eliminate those undisturbed conditions under the ruse of addressing "forest health."

ATTACHMENT Natl Old-Growth Amend DEIS Heartwood.pdf: PDF of Heartwood Comment Letter and comment campaign form