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Comments: I am a biologist, trained in botany, microbiology and mycology. I'm also a tree lover and was responsible, with friends, students and colleagues, for the building of the arboretum at Blue Ridge Community College. I am a forest user. With permission we brought in seedling trees from GWNF and Pedlar for some of the more uncommon species, deliberately choosing stock from different areas that might prove to have genetic differences that could prove valuable in the face of climate change. Since I retired and my arborist replacement has moved on, buildings have displaced some of the trees, but the variety and labels remain a good community educational tool. With other members of the Virginia Native Plant Society, I spent three summers surveying roads that were to be sprayed with herbicide to identify areas with valuable native plant populations to be spared. The federal government continues to reduce funding for the national forests and push for "other uses" that bring in revenue for maintenance. Our president thinks raking is the way to prevent forest fires. I have no information on other kinds of pressures you may be experiencing, but healthy eastern forests can survive many challenges. I have watched as gypsy moths and adelgids decimated trees for years and then slowly declined. But nothing yet traps carbon better than a mature deciduous forest with abundant leaf litter to absorb rain and deter erosion. I consider calling wood a "biofuel" a greedy simpleton's substitute for knowledge of the value of live trees, and the European delight in accepting pellets made from Eastern US forests as desecration. Owner/investors profit, but all of us are more threatened by the loss to mitigation of climate change here, around us.

All I have written is common knowledge to anyone likely to read this. But it is also verifiable to anyone who cares to invest the time and trouble.