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Comments: As a degreed professional biologist (retired,35 years with MD DNR), I can, perhaps better than most, appreciate and understand the values of old growth forests. As I am sure you realize, the Eastern deciduous forest-- stretching approximately from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic coast north of the southern pines-- was one of the largest contiguous biomes in the world. That is now virtually all wiped out and has suffered major species losses: American chestnut, for example. Other losses are impending, such as that driven by Dutch elm disease, Emerald ash borer, etc., not to mention simple destruction by human population growth-driven agriculture, fossil energy production, suburbanization, and urbanization. Increased riverine flooding (e.g. as currently seen in Kentucky), loss of carbon sequestration, increased carbon release to the atmosphere/climate change, coastal sea level rise and its associated financial costs can all be partially attributed to loss of forest cover, both nationally and globally.

I urge the Forest Service to support maximization/restoration of mature and old-growth forest area.

W.R. Carter, III