

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/3/2022 12:00:00 AM

First name: Michael

Last name: Helmeste

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for taking the next steps to advance President Bidens Executive Order on Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies. Its critical that you fulfill the presidents directive to provide lasting protections for these trees.

While your agencies work to define and inventory mature and old-growth forests, logging continues within these special areas, often under the guise of reducing wildfire risk. Thats why I urge you to enact an immediate moratorium on logging of mature and old-growth forestsuntil the inventory process is complete and more permanent protections can be put in place.

For the purpose of protecting these critical forests from logging, mature should be defined as trees 80 years old. Protecting mature forests and trees today will provide the foundation to recover old-growth ecosystems, which have largely been lost to logging across the landscape.

President Bidens Earth Day Executive Order rightly recognizes the urgent need to confront the threats that forests face.

A recent USDA Secretarial Memorandum stated, A primary threat to old-growth stands on national forests is no longer timber harvesting, but rather catastrophic wildfire and other disturbances resulting from the combination of climate change and past fire exclusion. This statement represents an alarming and inaccurate assessment of threats to mature and old-growth forests. Numerous logging projects across the country that target mature and old-growth trees, including projects in the name of restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, and wildfire mitigation, underscore this point. Not only is the threat of logging to mature and old-growth federal forests pressing, its one thats entirely within federal land management agencies power to address.

I urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of the Interior to work together to soon initiate a rule-making process based on a definition of mature forests and trees of 80 years old in order to permanently end their avoidable loss.