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Comments: Hello, reader! My name is Amelia Thompson, and I am a gardener who is training to be an arborist. I hope these ideas can help!

criteria for universal definition framework that motivates mature and old-growth forest conservation/can be used for planning and adaptive management:

1. New identification & conservation of old forests should focus on finding large old forests that haven't been divided by roads, and for those forests divided by roads, closing or limiting roads to just a few recreation areas/trailheads so people can connect with the landscape while feeling social pressure not to abuse the land. Roads, especially paved ones, pollute the forest, invite loggers and hunters, and cause animals to change their migration patterns.

2. You could also ask local nature centers and indigenous groups to help demarcate the boundaries of old forests near them, or to be advisors on conservation. Top down rules like choosing an arbitrary tree diameter to represent old trees may just confuse people whereas locals know their land. Many of these people would step up to the challenge, so you don't need to hire as many GIS people and surveyors.

some overarching old-growth and mature forest characteristics:

1. Wide area of forest where entire life cycles of oldest plant & animal inhabitants have played out
2. Provides habitat for native species, especially ones that are important to the people living near the forest
3. If possible, search for old forests with a buffer of understory plants to protect forest edges, otherwise the "edge effect" causes native species of plants and animals to retreat further into the forest while generalists and invasive species thrive at the edge.

How can a definition reflect changes based on disturbance and variation in forest type/composition, climate, site productivity and geographic region?

1. In my opinion, wide forests that are sparsely inhabited at the edges, forests that have recovered from logging, and forests where the tree species are changing with the climate should still be protected. I think forests that are disturbed by invasive species should get help from conservation corps and volunteers, but definitely we also need to focus on not paving over existing big forests where native species are thriving.

What, if any, forest characteristics should a definition exclude?

1. I don't think we have defined old forests by tree diameter for a while, but I want to emphasize that narrow definitions like this are treating trees like an expendable resource. People need to be reminded that their fates are tied to the forests they need in order to breathe and grow crops and escape from stress. A definition needs to take into account why old forests are important to the people living near them.

Lastly, I have a wonderful new book recommendation on this that shares examples of successful forest management, even in the Congo, Amazon, and Taiga forests where governing bodies often fund industry without even pretending to look at environmental impact statements or listening to stakeholders:

Ever Green: Saving Big Forests to Save the Planet by John W Reid. (published 2022)

Thank you for your time and attention, Amelia Thompson