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Comments: Nestled in the mountains of North Idaho is my grandparents farmhouse. When I was a kid, I would take walks through the surrounding woods, admiring the grand antiquity of the eldest pines and the fleeting beauty of the sky-blue wildflowers. Things were this way for as long as I could remember, a precious little world preserved in a painting. I went there again this summer, but the forest of my childhood was gone. My grandpa, a professional forester, explained what had happened: As the climate grew more miserably hot, the trees were left stressed and dehydrated. This prevented them from creating their protective resin to repel invading insects, and so parasitic bark beetles devoured the trees from the inside. The forest was ravaged, and had to be torn down so as to not be a fire hazard. In the end, uncounted local animals were left with their habitat in ruins. This domino affect is happening across America. We need to protect our forests and prevent this from continuing. Please.

Thank you for taking the next steps to advance President Bidens Executive Order (Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies) to fulfill the Presidents directive to provide lasting protection for these trees, and to make progress toward the Presidents goal to protect 30% of lands by the year 2030. As you know, conserving our remaining mature and old-growth forests and trees on federal lands represents one of the simplest and most cost-effective climate policies the U.S. can deploy at scale. Moreover, we know that the climate and biodiversity crises are growing exponentially worse, and we are running out of time to act. Mature and old-growth forests collectively contain the bulk of the carbon already stored in federal forests and they continue to sequester carbon at high rates. They also provide, across forest types, vital habitat and biodiversity benefits, and important sources of drinking water for communities. Critically, protecting mature forests today will provide the foundation for recovering old-growth ecosystems for the future. We are already seeing the impacts of a warming climate and it is critically important to create a meaningful rule that can be easily implemented across the landscape to protect the most high-value climate forests. For these reasons, please consider mature trees to be defined as no less than 80 years old.

President Bidens Earth Day Executive Order rightly recognized the essential role mature and old-growth forests play as a climate solution, and the urgent need to confront the threats these forests face - including from logging. Please work swiftly to create a strong, lasting rule across federal public lands that protect existing mature and old-growth trees and forests and allows the recovery of forests that have been lost. Now more than ever, our climate forests are worth more standing.