

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/31/2022 12:00:00 AM

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Title:

Comments: I am an avid outdoors person, 72 years old and a member of many non-profit environmental groups. I have hiked the entire PCT and hike every summer on wilderness and forest service trails. I have seen many hundreds of acres of old growth and mature trees and fully support their cataloging, mapping and no logging for now until they can be managed for their carbon content and age characteristics. Tree plantations have no life and provide many negative things to the landscape including barriers to wildlife movement and no bird or mammal habitat. I also think there should be a road moratorium on any areas having mature or old growth trees over 80 years old. Setbacks for logging all federal lands should be increased to 200 feet minimum from flowing and streams that only flow part of the year. These actions should be started immediately and not be subject to presidential changes as climate change does not recognize who is our president.

Thank you for taking the next steps to advance President Biden's Executive Order (Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies) to fulfill the President's directive to provide lasting protection for these trees, and to make progress toward the President's 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 Biden's 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.