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Comments: Thank you for this opportunity to be involved in the development of a definitional framework in regards to old growth and mature forests. This is a very important undertaking, as fewer and fewer acres of such forests exist with every passing year, and we are still learning how very important these forests are.

In the development of this framework, my hope is that you will use the best science available, both from within the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, as well as knowledge gained by the many reputable scientists outside these agencies who have studied these issues for years. Consideration of forest structure, processes, and functions should be relied upon in this definitional framework. Replacement of mature trees must also be taken into consideration to ensure that mature and old growth forests will exist in future years.

My understanding is that a great deal of information is currently available on where old growth and mature forests are located throughout the United States. Given the urgency of this undertaking, I hope that much of this data can be utilized for the inventory portion of this process, so that this undertaking can be completed as quickly as possible. Politically and ecologically, we don't have much time.

In the meantime, I would favor a moratorium on the logging of old growth forests. I understand this is very likely a non-starter, for so many reasons including the multiple use mission of both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, not to mention political realities. But with our warming climate, and the knowledge of the benefits of old trees, cutting more of them down while this process is completed would be avoided in my perfect world.

Thank you for taking these thoughts into consideration.

Jennifer Watson

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