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Title:

Comments: Thank you for caring about old growth forests and giving me the opportunity to comment. I live in the State of Indiana where old growth forests are largely undervalued by the USFS and the Indiana Division of Forestry, DNR. Despite a huge public outcry, public comments, demonstrations and visits to the Governor and Legislators in the Indiana Statehouse, the state government refuses to stop logging and burning federal and state forests. The U.S. Forest Plan and the IN State Forest Plan is outdated and does not consider management that takes Climate Change and diseases and insect decimation of certain trees into account.

Outside of Indiana, I would like to bring up these points as well. I recently visited the Four Corners and this land is so important to forest conservation and will help us immensely in correcting the climate.

Covering 15% of the land area in five states (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah), piñon pine and juniper forests are subject to temperature extremes and limited moisture availability. These forests are often the sole woodland provider of wildlife habitat, vegetative cover, watershed protection, and traditional food and medicine gathering in dryland and arid BLM-managed lands across the West.

Single-leaf piñon pine trees can reach ages of up to 600 years and juniper can reach ages of up to 1,600 years. These historic forests and associated undisturbed biological soil crusts store a disproportionate amount of carbon in dryland ecosystems, and are more resistant to disruptions caused by climate change.

Old-growth piñon-juniper forests are home to more than 70 bird species and are often the only suitable habitat for many of these species, whose populations are currently declining rapidly under intense pressure from climate change, development, and drought.

Although they cover hundreds of millions of acres and provide irreplaceable habitat and ecosystem benefits, piñon-juniper forests are among the least studied and most ignored North American forest types. The BLM should ensure that its inventory and criteria for mature and old-growth forests include piñon pine and juniper forests, which are the largest forest type by acreage managed by the agency.

Thank you, Julie Lowe Sierra Club, Hoosier Chapter Columbus, IN