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Comments: I demand that the administration and the Forest Service protect all old and mature trees on public lands. It is a vital action to both protect biodiversity and sequester harmful greenhouse gases. Protect all old and mature trees on public lands as the carbon-storing miracles they are is our best hope at mitigating climate change, with no cost attached.

I urge the Biden administration and the Forest Service to conduct a comprehensive inventory of all mature and old-growth forests in the Kootenai Forest (Yaak Valley) including those that are currently under threat of logging and in the piñon pine and juniper forests on the Colorado Plateau during this first phase of implementing the president's executive order. Both areas harbor unique ecosystems that must be preserved.

Please stop using our taxpayer money to support logging in distant wild ancient backcountry such as Black Ram. Public lands contribute only 3% to the domestic timber supply and none of it need be from old growth and mature forests-the next wave of old growth. Stop the proposed Black Ram Project immediately to begin an inventory.

It is important that ALL old-growth and mature forests, in dryland ecosystems as well as the better-known alpine and Pacific Northwest environments and forests throughout the 50 states, are conserved for the benefit of wildlife, air and water quality, climate adaptation, and so much more.

*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.

Sincerely,

Kathleen McCarthy