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Comments: Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland,

Thank you for taking the next steps to advance President Biden's Executive Order on Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies.

Protecting mature (old-growth) forests is an important policy for supporting a functional environment and thus, improved health and safety for human beings. Numerous studies continue to show that fully functional ecosystems are vital reservoirs for life support, supporting high quality water and air, mitigating weather- and climate-related incidents, improving ground water retention, and generally supporting a better quality of life.

Old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest are some of the best in the world for carbon storage and sequestration, helping to slow down climate change, and also helping to buffer communities from extreme wildfires.

I live in an area that includes mature forests that still provide these benefits.

I am also daily aware of the dreadful consequences of ignorant and irresponsible logging practices, such as clear-cutting and poisoning (through herbicide use) of steep slopes, and replacement of healthy forests with dense, even-aged stands of single-species conifers resulting in polluted waters, increased flooding and erosion, and a fire-storm-ready landscape.

EO 14072 fails to include on-going logging as a threat to mature, healthy federal forests. Continued logging of these forests destroys the vital role they play in the fight against climate change, as well as local ground water loss, destructive flooding, harsher local weather and runaway wildfires.

The Biden administration needs to protect this vital resource and improve quality of life for all, by doing everything it can to ensure lasting protections for our remaining mature and old-growth forests.