

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/30/2022 9:49:57 PM

First name: Ayn

Last name: Schmit

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a resident of Colorado, which includes extensive federally managed forests. As a biologist, I am very concerned for the health of our forests in general and mature and old growth forests in particular. These forests are, essentially, irreplaceable resources. Many of these old growth stands are threatened by past fire suppression in concert with climate change and increased outbreaks such as Western pine beetles and spruce beetles. I urge that you craft a definition of mature and old growth that is broadly inclusive. Consider that of the approximately 134 million acres of forests managed by the USFS, 56 million acres include trees that are more than 100 years old. With major worldwide forests such as the Amazon and Indonesian rainforests in steep decline from resource exploitation, protecting the health of US forests that offset 12% of our GHG emissions is increasingly essential. A broad and inclusive definition will help support a robust and comprehensive inventory of these resources and best position the US to adopt protective management practices that ensure they are protected into the future.