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Title:
Comments: Federal officials overseeing the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont are scheduled to double the amount of logging in the next five years over the previous five years. Under that plan, as much as 62 million board feet of lumber would be cut from the national forest.

Mature and old growth forests are the best places to increase biodiversity and stop climate change. Contrary to popular belief, the carbon storage and wildlife diversity of an 84-year-old forest is much more than twice that of a 40-year-old forest. For these reasons, it makes no sense to cut a forest just when it's beginning to get its ecological act together. Nonetheless, the U.S. Forestry Service permits forest cuts after the first 40 years claiming it is good for both the health of the forest and the local economy.

The motto of the U.S. Forest Service is to manage public lands for "the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time." With better understanding of old growth forests, it has become clear to let the forests grow to support the full range of native biodiversity while removing move carbon from the atmosphere.

In New England, the White and Green Mountain National Forests have some of the largest areas of intact and connected forests. It is better to let these forests mature than to plant trees.

Public forests cover just nine percent of New England. Significant parcels of public land are recovering the characteristics of older forests. Older forests accumulate as much as four times the carbon as younger forests. Public forests contain 30 percent more carbon than private forests on average due to larger stands of older forests.

The American marten and the endangered northern long-eared bat depend on undisturbed old forests. In addition to supporting high-quality habitat for New England's native species, older forests produce superior-quality drinking water. Forests also protect the watershed against flooding and drought.

More than 96 percent of the wood supply in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine comes from private forests. Four percent of the wood supply from public lands is not that significant of a benefit to local economies. Our economies also benefit when there's less damage from extreme weather events.

On Earth Day, President Biden issued an executive order that directs federal agencies to inventory and protect mature and old-growth forests on federal public lands. This is the law!

It's time President Biden took the next step with an executive order to exclusively protect all the nation's public forests, young, mature and old-growth forests. The lungs of the planet need all forests to inhale more carbon dioxide while we release less.

The logging of private lands and the cutting of plantation forests will continue. This is even more reason to protect public lands to provide the much-needed services of clean water, slow climate change, enact greater diversity of wildlife, and more Thoreauvian forest walks for everyone.