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Comments: I strongly support the USDA's proposal to adopt a National Forest Plan Amendment to Conserve and Steward Old Growth Forests. President Biden exercised commendable leadership in issuing Executive Order 14072 on Earth Day 2022, which committed the US to identify, inventory, and protect mature and old-growth forests on federal lands. This proposal is a meaningful step toward implementing the Executive Order.

As USDA works to finalize this critical proposal, USDA should ensure that the final rule protects mature trees and forests, and not just old-growth. In places like New Mexico and elsewhere across the country, we have very little old growth left, and it is important to protect that. But mature forests and trees are the ultimate key to success. Both old-growth and mature forests are essential to removing climate-warming carbon pollution from the air and storing it, safeguarding wildlife, and providing clean drinking water for our communities. We need to protect these forests to recover old growth, protect biodiversity, and ensure our forests are a powerful natural climate solution.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this important initiative.