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Comments: I am writing to express my strong support for the USDA's proposal to adopt a National Forest Plan Amendment to Conserve and Steward Old Growth Forests.

I believe that it is the responsibility of today's citizens to act in ways that transmit undiminished to future generations of Americans the natural treasures that we have the benefit of enjoying. This proposal represents a viable method to help protect our remaining old growth and mature forests found on National Forest Service lands.

I was very happy when 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. I am happy to see that this policy is now being put into effect through the development and release of this rule. Please act quickly to make sure this is effectively implemented.

A couple of comments for consideration as the USDA works to finalize this rule. USDA should ensure that the final rule also protects mature trees and forests, and not just old-growth. Due to the ravages of past unsustainable logging, most old-growth forests have been lost. The importance of mature forest protection is that these will be the old-growth forests of the future. This is particularly important in places like New Mexico and elsewhere across the country where very little old growth remains.

The benefits of both old-growth and mature forests should be called out for being essential to removing climate-warming carbon pollution from the air and storing it.

The role of these mature and old-growth forests in providing clean drinking water for our communities should be emphasized and included as one of the purposes for this new rule.

I believe that we need to protect these special 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.