

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/4/2024 8:43:46 PM

First name: Annabelle

Last name: Lee

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I whole-heartedly support the conservation of old growth National forests and their protection from logging as described in this land management plan. Old growth forests are not only rich and biodiverse areas that deserve conservation, the beauty and history they provide to humanity is irreplaceable. The importance they play in being carbon sinks to combat climate change also cannot be overstated. Almost all old growth forests have been lost in this country due to greed or mismanagement already, it is truly heartbreaking. It is extremely hard to quantify just how much of old growth American forests have been lost in the past 300 years due to incomplete surveying and inconsistent definitions, but it is conservative to say we only have a fraction of what once was.

However, while this protection for old-growth forests is long overdue, it is not enough - mature forests must also be protected! This is in part because old-growth forests are highly susceptible to the climate crisis-driven megafires and invasive pests, and their numbers will only decrease over time even with responsible conservation. Mature forests are an incredibly important part of the ecosystem (and important carbon sinks as well) that must be protected as habitat loss and the climate crisis worsens.

Another reason this plan is too conservative in not including mature forests is that only a small percent of national forests qualify - in inventory concluded earlier this year in response to a Biden executive order, the Forest Service found that 24.7 million acres, or 17 percent, of its 144.3 million acres of forest are old-growth, while 68.1 million acres, or 47 percent, are mature. It is recklessly irresponsible to not protect mature forests from logging and destruction because this is the sizable chunk of forests that will make the most impact in battling the climate crisis and habitat loss, and will become the old-growth forests of the future.

The only reasonable response to the continued habitat loss that fuels the huge biodiversity losses in this beautiful country is the protection of our environment, which should at a minimum include the protection of old-growth and mature forests. Please protect our country, protect our resources, protect our natural beauty and protect our climate. Thank you.