

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/30/2024 10:22:05 PM

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Comments: Please consider this message as our comment on the Forest Service's proposal about management of old-growth forests in all 128 units of the National Forest System.

We heartily endorse the fundamental idea in this measure, which is to give consistent direction to conserve and steward existing old-growth forests. We urge the Forest Service to proceed quickly to bring out a final version.

We have visited old-growth forests in several national forests, both in the nearby Allegheny National Forest and in the forests of the Pacific Northwest, where I (George) was born and raised.

We believe there's a basic problem in how the Forest Service has managed old growth over the past century. Now less than 17 percent of lands in the national forests qualify as old growth. That is a shame, because close to 100 percent was old growth at the beginning of the 20th century. Growing up in Oregon in the 1950s and 60s, I saw many of those trees going to the sawmills, in log booms floating in the Willamette River while awaiting their turn at the saw. I saw the result in seemingly endless railroad trains carrying lumber to market in California and the East.

The old policy of liquidating old growth should be ended right now. The values of old growth aside from saw timber should be recognized and considered in all forest management decisions. Habitat for birds, mammals, amphibians, invertebrates, and the values of intact forest ecosystems need to be considered before logging is authorized.

The proposal now published by the Forest Service wisely recognizes that mature trees store and continue to absorb large amounts of carbon. This is a useful policy to reduce the warming of the climate.

We also urge the Forest Service to provide more participation by the public and Indigenous Tribes in planning for conservation of old-growth and mature forests.

Thank you for considering our comments.