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First name: Julie

Last name: Bernstein

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management,

As someone who has been concerned about the environment for decades and a member of organizations including Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Action, the League of Conservation Voters, the Trust for Public Land, the Rainforest Coalition as well as organizations to protect biodiversity, I recognize that our practices over the last half century have completely morphed the landscape with respect to trees and other native flora. As someone trained in molecular biology and biochemistry who spent years doing research, I learned firsthand about how organisms evolve.

A combination of reading and thinking scientifically has made it clear to me that we have failed to appreciate the importance of old and mature growth trees as storage vessels of carbon, as mediators of a reduction in local surface temperatures, and as influences on the growth of scrub, native plants, young trees and many animal species. All of these organisms have evolved side-by-side so clearing old growth and mature trees introduces huge new selective pressures upon naive species of all kinds.

The notion that replacing old growth and mature trees with many young trees will provide equivalent benefits to the environment is unscientific. We know that in felling mature trees we are releasing vast carbon stores into the environment that would take decades for young trees to process. Young trees consume more carbon than old growth and mature trees because of their faster growth rate. (https://www.ncasi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NCASI22_Forest_Carbon_YoungVsOld_print.pdf) So, the ideal is to have both old and mature growth trees side-by-side with young trees that are already adapted to the same ecological niche. If we are not deliberate in the planting of new trees, we will disturb ecological balances by changing, for example, the type of insects that thrive, the food sources for animals and even the moisture level in the ground.

I strongly urge you to adopt an approach that protects mature and old growth trees by prohibiting the kind of massive logging that we have been engaging in for decades and to require that a certain number of native young trees be planted when mature growth forests are thinned. However it is paramount to assess each situation individually so as to consider the unique conditions of climate and existing flora and fauna in order to preserve the ecological balance in the local system.

Thank you,

Julie Bernstein