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Comments: I am writing to express my strong support for the recently proposed amendment to the land-management plans, specifically the protections aimed at preserving old-growth forests, as outlined in the notice of intent from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The acknowledgment of the essential role played by large, old trees in carbon storage to offset carbon emissions is a commendable and necessary step towards addressing climate change. While some groups may view these protections as an executive maneuver to limit commercial logging, the administration's assertion that logging is a relatively "minor threat" compared to climate change-driven stressors demonstrates a balanced and informed approach to forest management.

If finalized, these protections could play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of battles over logging and forest thinning, making forest management more collaborative- working with Indigenous communities in developing plans for old-growth, and recognizing the importance of local knowledge and involvement.

The proposed protections, with a primary focus on old-growth, mark a positive development. However, I would like to encourage the U.S. Forest Service to consider additional measures that address the protection of mature forests, recognizing their significant contribution to overall forest health and ecosystem resilience.

I am referencing the extensive coverage by Joshua Murdock, in the MISSOULIAN, which effectively captures the current landscape and the potential impact of the proposed protections on areas like the Yaak Valley and near Libby.

I commend the USDA for taking this necessary and long-overdue step to provide protections for old-growth forests. Your commitment to fulfilling President Biden's April 2022 executive order on protecting old-growth and mature forests is crucial for the preservation of these invaluable natural assets.

Thank you for your dedication to responsible stewardship and for considering the long-term impacts of land-management decisions. I sincerely hope the USFS finalizes and implements these protections, ensuring the preservation of our nation's old-growth and mature forests for current and future generations.