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Comments: I support the Forest Service Land Management Plan Direction to prioritize protection of remaining old growth forests. I am most concerned for these protections because old growth forests harbor increasingly threatened wildlife, including many species that require their unique features to survive. They also play vital roles in mitigating the climate, biodiversity, and freshwater crisis which also threaten wildlife.

I worry that an amendment allowing forests to be altered to reduce fuel hazards will be abused by entities with commercial or other interests and threaten the integrity or survival of a forest unnecessarily. My concern arises because, in California, healthy state forests are being destroyed and wildlife displaced simply for state and federal agencies to tap into the state wildfire budget intended for fire safety projects. The Forest Service Management Plan needs strictly defined conditions for amendments to be approved and a scientific review of requests. If old growth trees must be cut down, they should be required to be left in the forests to benefit wildlife and the forest ecosystem. This will also decrease incentive to prevent loopholes from being used for logging. Our old growth and mature forests are irreplaceable and invaluable and should be protected as such.

I also think mature forests should be treated with similar protections to those this plan would give old growth. There are so few old growth forests left that we need mature forests to augment their services and to survive to become old growth forests themselves.