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Comments: Management practices on old growth and mature forests need to be designed so there is minimal impact on the forest ecosystem. The scientific base for forest management of old growth Eastern forests has not been adequately established to justify either burning or logging these forests. Deep mature and old growth forest is a scarce resource that singularly supports forest interior species, including a number of plant, bat and migratory bird species. It may be necessary to do some elimination of invasive non native species, and that should be done with the least impact on the forest ecology as possible. Instead of logging and burning the forest, the Forest Service should do extensive study of how the ecosystem actually functions and establish a sound scientific base before implementing practices like logging and burning which have irrevocable effects that could take generations to reverse, if reversal is then possible. A forest ecosystem is a long term affair where destructive practices have generational effects. Private land is not likely to offer the opportunity for study of large tracts of undisturbed forestland for study. Public forest land should be held in trust for future generations and so cared for conservatively, employing only well documented and thoroughly understood practices. Nature is complicated and giving the forest held in public hand its chance to manage itself while the Forest Service observes and studies how it works would be the prudent alternative to forest management.

There are also sound economic reasons to leave the forests held in trust for the public and governmentally owned. Left relatively untouched old growth and mature forests could yield yet undiscovered herbal and plant benefit. We continue to discover various health benefits from plant and mushroom species growing in them. It is important to conserve our National Forests as laboratories to protect as yet potential undiscovered beneficial species that exist only in mature and old growth forests.

Logging on government land provides timber that is often below cost and competes with local private timber owners. The government should not be allowed to do this.

Carefully monitored and controlled recreational opportunities provided by old growth and mature forests are unique and a valuable function for public land to serve. Logging and burning critically reduces these opportunities.

With concerns for climate change become more acute, logging and burning for forest management is counterproductive. Old growth and mature forests provide critical carbon sinks and should be left to do that job.

Thank you for your consideration!