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Comments: I am writing to express my support for a strong amendment to protect all old growth and mature trees and forests on National Forest land from logging. The amendment should have no loopholes, such as the one for fire mitigation. Old growth trees are naturally resistant from fire. That 90% of the old growth component of our National Forests has been lost is almost entirely due to the ravages of the U.S.F.S. timber cutting program. It is now the responsibility of the Forest Service to protect what old growth remains and to nurture the mature component as it becomes old growth over time.

Old growth and mature forests provide a host of benefits to both wildlife and mankind. Their ability, in this age of a rapidly deteriorating global climate, to absorb and store carbon is vital to our very survival. Preserving these forests will contribute to the President's 30X30 goal to protect and restore biodiversity. Other, equally important benefits include water filtration and runoff regulation, habitat for old growth-dependent species, human enjoyment.

It happens that, during the entire process of carrying out the President's directive to protect old growth, and continuing as this amendment is being developed, old growth is being cut in National Forests throughout the country. Therefore, I urge you to place an immediate moratorium on cutting old growth and mature trees and forests.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.