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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Chief Moore,

Thank you moving towards more meaningful protections for existing old-growth forests and trees across the United States.

From my home in Montpelier, VT, we know the impacts of the climate crisis first-hand. Our downtown, the state's capital city, was covered in 6-feet of water this summer. Businesses are just starting to reopen. We still have no post office. We absolutely need our headwater forests to be protected, and its OLD forests that will maximize water benefits for people downstream.

Across the country, so many of our U.S. public lands were initially protected to protect our water. It's time we return to those roots. And what is so viscerally clear to those of use in flood-prone communities is that how we treat our headwater forests directly impacts our homes and livelihoods downstream.

Protecting old forests is imperative to protecting water health. It's important to protect not just those forests that are oldest today, but also protect those aging forests that will become old forests if given the gift of time. This is especially true here east of the Mississippi, where our forests are just beginning to recover from near-total devastation less than 150 years ago.

Given the incredibly important role mature and old-growth trees and forests play in fighting the climate and biodiversity crises, it is vital that America establish the strongest possible safeguards for their conservation. We encourage the Forest Service to maintain its timeline for this amendment process, and robustly engage with Tribal Nations, the public, and other stakeholders.

Thank you,
Kassia Randzio