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Comments: RESTORE OLD GROWTH FORESTS IN THE HOOSIER AND OTHER NATIONAL FORESTS

STOP BURNING CENTRAL HARDWOOD FORESTS: The USDA must restrain the Forest Service from plans to conduct prescribed burns throughout the Hoosier National Forest (HNF) and other eastern national forests until it has established a scientific record that fire was a significant natural disturbance agent in the central hardwoods and should not allow prescribed burning otherwise. Indiana is in the heart of the region that is least prone to fire.

STOP LOGGING MATURE HARDWOOD FORESTS: Much of the forest within the HNF is a century or more old and only a few decades from returning to old growth condition. The USDA should not let the Forest Service stop the restoration of old growth forests by cutting mature forests under the notion of "forest health" or making old growth forest "more resilient". This is particularly true for national forests like the HNF where there is abundant mature forest, but very little undisputed old growth forest.

MONITOR MATURE AND OLD GROWTH FOREST: Given there is so little old growth eastern hardwood forest, the Forest Service should stop assuming it knows all there is to know about such forest. The Forest Service should follow the Notice that "Consistent and effective monitoring of current and future old-growth forest conditions over time would better inform adaptive management" rather than spending its budget on burning and logging programs. This monitoring should document that the agency's management is allowing significantly more old growth forest to return to the HNF and other eastern national forests.