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Comments: USDA Forest Service cuts down trees (even old growth) and further fragments our forests. Sounds rather like the Firemen of Bradbury's book FAHRENHEIT 451 who set fires and burned homes. Forest Service management plans appear to need updating to

*reflect crisis of climate change,

*comply with State and Federal Acts limiting logging on our (as these lands belong to ALL of us) valuable forest land, and

*emerging science related to importance of preserving forest networks (above and below ground).

Science of forest health continues to document critical importance of intact underground fungal networks.

Underground communication systems, not dissimilar to neural networks of human nervous system monitor for stress, communicate, and provide nutrients for neighbor trees. Disruption of these systems undermines health of new growth and weakens forest system overall. For example, old growth trees, their roots deep in the soil, pull water from depths unavailable to new growth. Transfer of water and nutrition between old trees and seedlings can mean the difference between surviving a dry spell or death from drought for saplings and shallow rooted trees. (Simard; FINDING THE MOTHER TREE)

Health of the intact forest ecosystem supports insects, birds, wildlife, water quality, maintains soil health, prevents erosion, sequesters carbon in trees as well as soil/ mycelium/ tree roots, and many other critical functions. Humans are only beginning to understand these ancient systems. As Simard notes, clear cutting, but particularly old growth stands causes complex mycorrhizal networks to 'unravel into chaos'. Seedlings begin to re-grow and reorganize into new underground network, but lacking the positive influence of largest, oldest trees, and with stresses related to climate change, the forest network may never be the same, its contribution to climate mitigation significantly weakened. Further, as a State and Nation, we've committed to preserving forests in order to help with climate mitigation. Destruction of trees and soil/mycelium/roots destroys the systems, developed over decades/ centuries, required to maintain healthy forest ecosystems.

Forest Service should prioritize "go slow" approach to forest management. It should seek ways to offset negative human impacts related to forest fragmentation and habitat destruction that place increasing numbers of non-human forest inhabitants at risk.

Our forests are important for health of the planet, human health, health of non-human neighbors. Viewing forests as a resource to be managed through extraction of trees, or 'recreation opportunities' for humans is selfish and shortsighted. We (and Forest Service) must acknowledge we are but ONE element (not THE element) in a very complex web of life. We rush through lives measured in decades. Such hubris to think we have sufficient knowledge or right to eliminate trees and forest systems that mature over centuries or millennia.

Protect the forests and wild places (for ALL who depend on them) by NOT cutting, NOT building more roads, NOT creating openings in the forest/ canopy for game species, NOT causing more fragmentation, erosion, destruction.

Thank you, Elissa Close