

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/24/2024 12:57:59 PM

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Comments: Greetings,

As a concerned Hoosier, I wanted to submit this comment on this DEIS proposal.

The Biden/Harris Administration instructed the USFS to use its authority to protect and restore more old growth conditions in our national forests, but this DEIS does exactly the opposite.

If the USFS has their way, mature forests will be logged and burned under the ruse of maintaining forest health. The same commercial logging will continue, and appreciable levels of old growth forest will never return to the Hoosier National Forest or other eastern national forests.

Along with logging, use of prescribed fire is overemphasized in all of these new documents. While wildfire is a major threat in western conifer forests, scientific research, including studies by the Forest Service itself show that the logging of mature and old growth trees promoted in the DEIS worsen wildfire risks in the west.

Furthermore, wildfire is not a threat to eastern deciduous forests. Despite this, USFS is using a one size fits all approach to undertake prescribed fire everywhere under the false premises of reducing threats of wildfires and restoring natural ecosystems. Each unique forest type and ecosystem needs to be treated for its unique characteristics.

There is not, nor has there ever been, evidence that fire is a significant agent of natural disturbance in eastern hardwood forests. Due to rains that accompany lightning strikes in the east, natural fires in the central hardwood forests of Indiana occur at most, once every hundred or few hundred years. The USFS is currently burning forests for "health" every 2-5 years.

This extreme practice jeopardizes the stored water in eastern forests, drying them out further as they face hotter periods and longer, extended droughts due to climate change.

Please protect our old growth forests. We ALL need them to survive, not only humans, but the diversity of other species that share this land with us.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mathews

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