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Comments: Eastern deciduous forests (a.k.a. hardwood forests) are part of this important plan amendment. Given the very small amount of old growth eastern hardwood forests, they have to be considered an endangered ecosystem that is different from those in the West.

Mature growth hardwood forests that are 80 years or older must be allowed to grow to old growth conditions that are 130 years and older to adhere to EO 14072. Mature and old growth (MOG) stands must be treated differently than younger age classes because of their unique characteristics and importance. Without leaving more mature forests alone to return to the old growth condition (which in addition to old trees, is defined by lack of human disturbance for 80 or more years)

All current projects with MOG forests should be frozen until the amendment can be made to their respective national forest plans and then modified to meet the objectives of the amendment to conserve and restore MOG forests. This should include both Houston South and Buffalo Springs Vegetative Management Projects in the Hoosier National Forest.