

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/23/2024 6:12:51 AM

First name: David

Last name: Pedersen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ms. Kleinsmith, Mr. Yamnik, and Forest Service staff:

I am a Canadian climate and clean-air advocate who is alarmed by the continued logging of old-growth trees in North America and elsewhere, especially in our two countries. Here on Vancouver Island where I live, for example, the interior of the island has been devastated by numerous and frequent clear cuts, which are aesthetically disturbing, destructive to wildlife, and terrible for erosion and flood control.

As such, I respectfully submit these comment on the June 20th Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Management Plan Direction for Old-Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System #65356. This plan has the potential to move our shared climate fight forward and protect the ancient forests we all love and depend on by reducing the logging of old-growth forests in the United States' national forests; however, a number of important changes must be made prior to its finalization for it to achieve that purpose.

I call on you to realize the promise of President Biden's forests executive order by finalizing the strongest-possible standards to protect old-growth forests, including by ending commercial logging of old growth and issuing strong protections for mature trees and forests from the clear and present threat of logging. Protecting and recovering these natural climate and flood-control solutions would and should form a key pillar of the United States' climate policy, reinforce the United States' international climate leadership, and set an example for other countries like mine to follow.

Safeguarding and expanding carbon-rich forests on Forest Service lands is one of the most important, cost-effective, and timely approaches to fighting and mitigating the climate crisis. Mature and old-growth trees store and continue to absorb large amounts of carbon in addition to providing the public with cleaner air and drinking water, erosion and flood control, habitat for imperiled wildlife, and world-class recreational opportunities. Larger, older trees are also more fire resistant, and stronger protections would still allow for necessary efforts to address the risk of fire (although I would hope that such efforts do not require combustion since such techniques can result in more flammable new growth and pollute surface and ground water in addition to the air pollution created by the burning).

Unfortunately, vital mature and old-growth forests and the trees within them are currently threatened by numerous proposed and ongoing logging projects, and the current proposal doesn't do enough to protect them from such proposals. The United States needs to ensure both mature AND old-growth trees and forests on federal lands, including in national forests, remain in place to mitigate climate change and to maintain their natural benefits for present and future generations.

Accordingly, I respectfully ask that you strengthen the DEIS by preventing old-growth trees from being logged or sold and closing loopholes that would undermine old growth protections. The final decision also needs to be clearer about protection of the United States' old-growth crown jewel - the Tongass National Forest, which is shared with and forms part of the Great Bear Rainforest here in British Columbia. The draft correctly removes an explicit Tongass exemption but includes ambiguous language that might be used to justify continued commercial logging of old growth on the Tongass, especially in light of the overturning of ??????????????. Additionally, I kindly ask that you work to advance protections for mature (future old-growth) forests.

Thank you for your time and consideration of and leadership on these important issues.