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Comments: It is essential that we preserve our remaining mature and old-growth trees and forests. They help protect our climate, filter drinking water, shelter wildlife, and provide many other essential benefits.

This draft proposal allows old-growth trees to be sent to the mill and allows agency staff to manage old-growth out of existence in pursuit of "proactive stewardship" goals. The draft also contains ambiguous language that could be used to justify continued commercial logging of old growth in the Tongass.

I urge you to strengthen the proposal to:

- 1) End the cutting of old-growth trees in all national forests and forest types and end the cutting of any trees in old-growth stands in moist forest types.
- 2) End any commercial exchange of old-growth trees. Even in the rare circumstances where an old-growth tree is cut (e.g. public safety), that tree should not be sent to the mill.
- 3) Protect mature forests and trees - future old growth - from the threat of commercial logging in order to recover old growth that has been lost to past mismanagement. Protection of mature forests can be accomplished in a manner that is consistent with addressing the threat of fire.

I urge you to ensure that we are protecting our oldest trees and forests. Failure to do so undermines the objectives of this amendment, contravenes the direction of Executive Order 14072, and ignores 500,000+ public comments the agency received on last summer's advance notice of proposed rulemaking.

For the sake of all of us, but especially the young people who need the climate protections and other benefits that forests provide, please strengthen the amendment to protect mature and old-growth forests. Thank you.