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Comments: As a stakeholder, I urge the Forest Service to conserve mature and old-growth trees in federal forests to combat the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. There is broad agreement that what we have left is too precious to cut. The FS must lay groundwork for durable protections for mature forests, to ensure that they are able to develop into our next generation of old-growth forests. Despite being cherished across the country, old-growth forests on federal lands remain unprotected from logging. Forests are one of the most efficient, scalable, and cost-effective ways we have to absorb and store carbon - period. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is specifically dedicated to advancing climate change science: "Forestry can make a very significant contribution to a low-cost global mitigation portfolio that provides synergies with adaptation and sustainable development. However, this opportunity is being lost in the current institutional context and lack of political will to implement and has resulted in only a small portion of this potential being realized at present."

Protecting forests is not only a low-cost carbon solution but also one that boosts climate adaptation and sustainable development. The science is clear, the best tool for addressing carbon pollution is also the oldest - our trees and forests. Protecting our forests keeps more than trees standing - it preserves vital habitat for the wildlife we love. More than 3,000 species of wildlife live within our National Forests! Right now, the U.S. loses a football field worth of natural space to development every 30 seconds, putting countless vulnerable species at risk of extinction. Protecting our forests is an investment in our economy and expands outdoor equity. In 2019, Forest Service lands tallied 150 million recreation visits, generated \$10.1 billion in local spending, and supported 153,800 jobs. 80% of outdoor activities -- from camping to fishing to sport climbing -- have seen an increase in participation in recent years, and those visiting the outdoors are becoming more diverse.

Again, I call on the USFS to conserve mature and old-growth trees in federal forests to combat the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.