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Comments: My concern over this amendment is due to the fact that early successional forests are essential to biodiversity, as wildlife habitat for threatened and endangered species, and also for carbon sequestration. The focus on mature forests is a popular movement forwarded by radical preservationists who reject science. Somehow this has found its way to the upper echelons of the USFS administration. The idea that management does more damage than good in all contexts is categorically false.

While the Tongass National Forest should be left alone given its virgin condition, forests in the Central Hardwood Regions require management. They are currently in a state of disarray from USFS mistakes in management during the Civilian Conservation Corps era, during which non-native species of pine, for example, were planted with harvest in mind. These Forest create habitat deserts and must be converted to oak-hickory for the sake of numerous songbirds, whose populations have plummeted, as well as game birds, wild turkeys, deer, etc.

The forest managers here in Indiana and Illinois should be left to make these management decisions. There are certainly some areas of forest that should be allowed to reach maturity. But the fear is that all management will be curtailed in the name of mature forests and wildlife species that require young forests will suffer as a result, as will biodiversity generally.

Finally, diversity of age classes is essential for a forest to withstand the challenges posed by climate change. This is science, and the USFS should follow science rather than those who, let's face it, one hundred percent care only about aesthetics or an overblown idea of the importance of old forests in the carbon cycle. Young forests sequester carbon more quickly. Old growth store more. We need a mix.