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First name: Andrea

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Chief Randy Moore, U.S. Forest Service

Re: USDA Old-Growth Initiative

Date: August, 26, 2024

Dear Chief Moore,

I am so excited to see the US Forest Service focus on preserving old-growth forests. These forests are so important on so many levels: ecosystem health, climate health, planet health, and people health! However, I do have concerns about the DEIS for protecting old growth on our national forests. I ask that the DEIS be strengthened to ensure the strong protections needed for our remaining old growth. Here in the Pacific Northwest the vast majority of old growth was logged over the fifty years after WWII. In addition, much of our natural forests were transformed into timber plantations. Much more needs to be done to help these timber plantations develop into old growth.

Sadly, mature and old growth forests continue to be logged on our national forests. Here in the Pacific Northwest our old growth forests are among the most carbon dense in the world. These forests also help us fight the biodiversity crisis. We do understand that in some rare circumstances, such as for public safety, that older trees need to be cut; in such cases those trees should be left on the forest floor. We also understand that here in the Pacific Northwest we need to manage our moist west side forests differently than our dryer east side forest. Yes, ecologically appropriate restoration is needed on those east side forests, but that should never include logging old growth trees.

Mature and old-growth trees and forests protect our climate and provide critical environmental benefits by:
absorbing and storing carbon,
boosting resilience to fire,
helping regulate temperatures, and
filtering drinking water and sheltering wildlife.

Given these many benefits, logging these forests makes no sense. These forests also provide all of us a wonderful sense of awe; one cannot help but feel a sense of wonder in these extraordinary forests.

Lastly, I encourage you to do a better job of ensuring strong monitoring and accountability measures. The public needs to know the results of these amended plans to protect old growth. In that way trust can be strengthened.

Sincerely,

Andrea Hills