

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/30/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Beth

Last name: Cataldo

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of prioritizing the care of mature and old-growth trees in our national forests. Forests are homes for wildlife and protect our climate by absorbing and storing tons of carbon every year. These trees and forests also boost ecosystem resilience to fire and help regulate forest temperatures.

Cutting down our oldest trees deprives us of the benefits, beauty and majesty of our largest, oldest trees. These trees are worth more standing.

With the proposed National Old-Growth Amendment, the Forest Service has an opportunity to protect our mature and old-growth trees. The current draft proposal fails to do so.

The policy proposals include numerous opportunities for the Forest Service to cut old-growth trees and send them to the mill. All of the proposed alternatives allow agency staff the discretion to manage old growth out of existence in pursuit of "proactive stewardship" goals. They also contain ambiguous language that could be used to justify continued commercial logging of old growth in the Tongass National Forest. None of the Alternatives proposed would protect our oldest trees and forests.

For me to support these amendments, I consider it necessary that the final amendments address these deficiencies:

- 1.The Forest Service must end the logging of old-growth trees across our national forests.
- 2.The Forest Service must end the commercial exchange of old-growth trees logged on forestlands managed by the agency. No old-growth trees should be sent to mills.
- 3.The Forest Service must establish protections for mature forests and trees to increase the amount of old growth for our children and generations beyond.

Thank you for your consideration,

Beth