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Comments: In sum, I find that Alternative 2 does not provide enough protections for old growth forests, and doesn't seem to provide any protections for mature forests. The authors note that only 3% of timber products produced in the United States come from Forest Service lands, so there would not really be much harm in imposing a much higher level of protections for our precious National Forests. I prefer Alternative 3, more restrictions on activities in National Forests. I do not think the current Draft embodies the spirit and intent of the Executive Order issued to conserve and protect the mature and old growth forests of the United States. I am unhappy that the other more restrictive Alternatives were rejected. It seems likely to me that timber industry panic at being denied access to the big valuable trees everyone prizes accounts for much of the unfortunate language in the current Draft.

I would like to see our National Forests protected from all logging activities since they provide such a small proportion of timber products to the national supply. The Draft Proposal also shows that forests can be managed with prescribed burns, so logging and the drastic disruption of ecosystems that logging causes is not necessary in National Forests.

Mature forests should be offered more protection, as they show enhanced ability to sequester CO2-

Enhanced woody biomass production in a mature temperate forest under elevated CO₂, Nature Climate Change (2024). DOI: 10.1038/s41558-024-02090-3