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Comments: As an environmentally motivated voter who is a native and a resident of the Northwest, I am deeply concerned that mature and old-growth forests in the Black Ram project in the Yaak and other areas of the country are being targeted and logged despite scientific evidence demonstrating that old-growth forests are more resilient to wildfires when left untouched. The Forest Service's draft plan lacks adequate protection for old-growth forests, and it overlooks mature forests, which are forests poised to become old-growth in the coming decades. It is a betrayal of the American people, to whom these forests belong, for the Forest Service to be making strenuous efforts to log mature forests for profit before they can reach old-growth status protection.

The importance of old-growth forests such as those in the Black Ram area of the Yaak goes beyond their beauty as majestic landscapes; they provide essential and needed habitats for a wide range of plants and animals, especially our imperiled Yaak population of grizzly bears.

That biodiversity that they uniquely support provides much-needed ecological resilience as the climate changes. In addition, old-growth forests, by excelling at absorption and storage of carbon dioxide, play a vital role in moderating the climate change that is creating increasing and increasingly expensive disasters.

For all of these reasons, the Forest Service's proposal must be dramatically strengthened to the point that it prevents logging of mature as well as old-growth forests, and that the ancient primary forest at Black Ram, on the Kootenai National Forest, is protected as a Climate Refuge. Forest defense is climate defense.