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Comments: Old-growth forests and trees are invaluable in terms of cultural and biodiversity values, playing a crucial role in capturing and storing carbon, providing clean water, and developing diverse plant and animal life. By conserving and recruiting old-growth forests, we can effectively combat the impacts of climate change and preserve these cornerstones of our wildlands.

The Forest Service's proposal aims to amend all land management plans across the national forest system to promote ecologically driven management, address threats to old-growth forests, and expand their distribution and abundance. Additionally, it seeks to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge and Tribal Leadership, facilitate adaptive strategies, and monitor old-growth forest trends and distribution patterns.

However, there are three crucial changes that need to be made to the proposal to ensure the achievement of these goals:

1. Prevent Degradation: The policy must include clear directives to protect and enhance existing old-growth forests and trees, ensuring that management actions are beneficial to long-term health.
2. Embrace Passive Management: It is essential to acknowledge that many existing old-growth forests, like those in the Pacific Northwest and eastern U.S., do not require active management. Appropriate restraint is as valuable as active management.
3. Establish Clear Standards: Consistent guidelines must be established for the stewardship of sufficient older mature forests that can restore old-growth distribution and abundance.

By incorporating these changes, the U.S. Forest Service can ensure that this proposal not only protects existing old-growth forests but also promotes their expansion and resilience in the face of climate change. I urge you to adopt these improvements to make this policy as effective as possible in safeguarding our nation's forests for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration and for your efforts to protect our invaluable old-growth forests.