

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/16/2024 4:38:06 PM

First name: Christine

Last name: Kohnert

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Subject: Support for U.S. Forest Service's Proposal to Protect Old-Growth Forests with Critical Improvements Needed

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

The following proposed amendments to national forest management plans to protect and enhance old-growth forests are exactly what we need to build climate resilience as we experience the rapidly accelerating, life threatening impacts of global warming that will impact the survival of our children and all living things going forward.

These amendments align with President Biden's Executive Order 14072. What we are seeing locally in Skagit County is significant and more frequent flooding, salt water intrusion increasingly destroying farmland, longer hotter summers bringing drought to some of the most fertile and productive farmlands in the country, temperatures and lack of tree cover is a major threat to salmon - a major food source for humans, whales, wintering eagles and other ocean wildlife. Wildfires increasingly rage in parts of the state over our extending dry season. Our glaciers are melting and disappearing, we increasingly see rocks exposed on areas once covered with ice and snow through the summer. We have depended on glacier melt and snowpack to as a water source in the summer to feed our reservoirs, irrigate our farmlands and fight the increasingly dangerous and air polluting wildfires.

Executive order 14072 is a significant step towards addressing climate change, improving wildfire resilience, and preserving old-growth forests' invaluable ecological, cultural, and biodiversity values. More is needed to address this crisis. I urge you to strengthen the proposal with the following critical improvements:

*Prevent Degradation of Existing Old-Growth Forests: The proposal must include clear directives to protect and enhance current old-growth conditions. *Management actions should be strictly beneficial, with a focus on preventing any degradation of these critical ecosystems.

*Recognize the Value of Passive Stewardship: Many old-growth forests, particularly in regions like the Pacific Northwest and the eastern U.S., do not require active management to thrive. The policy should recognize the importance of passive stewardship-allowing nature to take its course-and incorporate it as a key strategy in preserving old-growth forests.

*Establish Clear Standards for Stewardship: To restore and expand old-growth forests, the proposal should establish clear, enforceable standards and guidelines. This will ensure that sufficient mature forests are conserved and managed to achieve the broader goal of increasing 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.

Sincerely,

Christine Kohnert