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First name: Jeanne

Last name: Robinson

Organization:

Title:

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Urgent Support Needed on National Policy to Conserve Old-Growth Forests!

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A historic federal policy proposal is a great step forward in protecting old-growth forests, but it must be improved!

The proposal, put forth by the U.S. Forest Service, aligns perfectly with President Biden's Executive Order 14072, which prioritizes climate-informed strategies to enhance forest carbon, increase wildfire resilience, and mitigate climate impacts on federal lands.

What's at Stake:

Old-growth forests and trees are not only invaluable in terms of cultural, and biodiversity values, but they also play a crucial role in absorbing and storing significant amounts of carbon. By conserving and recruiting old-growth forests, we can effectively combat the impacts of climate change.

These forests also provide clean drinking water, support diverse plant and animal life, offer cultural resources for Tribes, and contribute to recreational activities that promote overall well-being.

Current Situation:

The Forest Service's proposal aims to amend all land management plans across the national forest system to promote ecologically driven management to 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:

The policy must include direction that prevents degradation of existing old-growth forests and trees, ensuring that management actions are beneficial and "protect and enhance" old-growth conditions.

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. Passive stewardship, intentionally choosing restraint, is as important as active management.

Clear standards and guidelines must be established to ensure the stewardship of sufficient older mature forests to restore old-growth distribution and abundance.

We urgently need your support to bring attention to these necessary changes and advocate for the adoption of this historic policy!

By doing so, we can maintain and expand old-growth conditions on federal lands, incorporate Tribal knowledge and co-stewardship, and promote climate-smart management and conservation strategies to address threats and conserve our nation's old-growth forests.

The public comment period for the U.S. Forest Service proposal runs until Sept. 20. Make your voice heard and join the movement to protect our invaluable old-growth forests!

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

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed amendments to national forest management plans aimed at protecting and enhancing old-growth forests, in alignment with President Biden's Executive Order 14072. This historic proposal is a significant step forward in addressing climate change, improving wildfire resilience, and preserving the invaluable ecological, cultural, and biodiversity values of old-growth forests. However, I urge you to strengthen the proposal with the following critical improvements.

Necessary 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 and 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,

Jeanne Robinson 661 W Kamilche Ln. Shelton, WA 98584 360-464-8446