

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/20/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Maren

Last name: Cooke

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forests are essential to ecosystem function: holding soil, managing water, providing habitat, tempering wind, sequestering carbon, and other vital services. Mature and old-growth forests are also places of beauty and respite for human visitors. The remaining mature and old-growth forests in the U.S. are a national treasure, and should not be treated as commodity production zones. Not everything needs to be harvested!

The biodiversity present in mature and old-growth forests is irreplaceable. No amount of post-logging "restoration" efforts can really restore these habitats; certainly not their conversion to commercially-logged tracts, whatever the size. Narrowly defining the term "mature" to remove (or fail to add) protections against logging will cause irreparable damage. I appreciate President Biden's executive action to add greater protections, and I hope that you will follow both the letter and the spirit of his executive order as you update official guidelines.

Replanting trees does not replace the carbon-sequestration potential of existing mature trees. Seedlings, saplings, and young trees don't pack on carbon nearly as fast as big trees, and the soil disturbance and premature decomposition of root mass add even more CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere. We are in a climate emergency, and simply cannot afford to prioritize production of paper and timber, let alone corporate profits, over protecting the leafy "lungs" of the planet.