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First name: Gwen

Last name: Jaspers

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Mature and old-growth trees and forests protect our climate by their absorption and storage of carbon, boosting forest resilience to fire, helping regulate temperatures, filtering drinking water and sheltering wildlife. Logging mature and old-growth forests deprives us of the benefits and necessities for life that old forests provide.

My understanding is that the current Draft Environmental Impact Statement fails to protect these life necessities provided by mature and old-growth forests and includes ambiguous language that could be interpreted to justify continued commercial logging of the Tongass old-growth forest. In this era of climate chaos we must be most careful and attentive to what is needed for current and future generations to inhabit a livable planet. Even if it is controversial, the precautionary principle must be taken to heart and assertively applied in this case. Just because there is conflicting information on carbon storage verifiability for mature and old-growth trees, does not in any way validate the destruction of these magnificent ecosystems to the lesser need for wood products. Especially as it becomes more clear their protection is a significant player for planet livability. We can't go back. Once old-growth is cut, it's gone; an act we will forever regret.

I understand the proposal allows old-growth trees to be sent to the mill and allows agency staff to manage old-growth through the use of "proactive stewardship" goals. I think it should be clear to government oversight agencies by now, that overall, the US timber industry has long shown it is incapable of responsible stewardship of our forests. It is the responsibility of the government to monitor this industry's profit motivated, singularly focused, greedy plans. You are accountable to 'we' the people, including people who will need these ecosystems to be healthy and thriving in the future.

I urge you to consider and do the following:

1. End the cutting of old-growth trees in all national forests and forest types and end the cutting of any trees in old-growth stands in moist forest types.
2. End all commercial exchange of old-growth trees. Even in the rare circumstances where an old-growth tree is cut (e.g. public safety), that tree should not be sent to the mill.
3. Protect mature forests and trees - future old growth - from commercial logging to allow future old-growth that might replace past old-growth mismanagement
4. Include in carbon accounting rules credit for leaving old forests intact.

I sincerely urge you to take this opportunity to protect our oldest trees and forests. Failure to do so undermines

the objectives of this amendment, contravenes the direction of EO 14072 and ignores 500,000+ public comments the agency received on last summer's advance notice of proposed rulemaking.

Please take this task seriously for the future of all we hold dear. Be ahead of the times and at least start moving us to the future comprehensive conservation policies for forests our societies will eventually embrace whole heartedly. There are and will be future alternatives to wood. We must move beyond our small visions and tight grasps on how to be prosperous. Please make your decisions for the whole of our country. We need you to make decisions for the greater good. In this case, for climate stability and a better chance for a livable planet.

Thank you for your time and honest hard work.

Sincerely,

Gwen J

Oregon