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First name: Robert

Last name: Rutkowski

Organization:

Title:

Comments: [External Email]NOGA fails to protect and expand mature and old-growth forests in the Eastern US

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Randy Moore, Chief

US Forest Service

USDA Forest Service

Sidney R. Yates Federal Building

201 14th Street, SW

Washington, DC 20024

Randy.Moore@usda.gov

Re: NOGA fails to protect and expand mature and old-growth forests in the Eastern US

Dear Chief:

Environmental groups urged the U.S. Forest Service today to revisit new proposed forest management guidelines because they fail to provide enough protection, including against logging, for old-growth trees and forests in the Eastern United States.

A letter from 34 organizations calls for bold leadership and a science-based approach that protects mature forests to help recover and expand old-growth ecosystems. The forests are critical for biodiversity, mitigating climate change and ensuring resilience to floods and droughts. The groups requested a meeting to address problems identified in the recently issued National Old-Growth Amendment draft environmental impact statement.

Nearly all of the old-growth forests in the Eastern United States are gone, and now the Forest Service wants to cut what's left. We need a rule that actually protects our forests. This draft rule would allow even more of our mature forests to be logged when we should be protecting the few old-growth forests that remain.

Recognizing the importance of mature and old-growth forests, President Biden issued a 2022 executive order spurring the current forest plan amendments. Today's coalition letter highlights that the Service's planned amendment would facilitate logging in both mature and old-growth

forests, disregard the executive order and thwart efforts to recover mature and old-growth ecosystems in Eastern national forests.

The Service scheduled a series of public meetings across the country July 10 to discuss the amendment. However, only one meeting is planned for east of the Mississippi, highlighting the agency's failure to recognize the unique qualities and needs of Eastern forests and its disregard for residents in Eastern states.

Honor the unique and irreplaceable role of today's mature forests as the building blocks of future old-growth that our children and grandchildren might inherit.

Without course-correction, the Forest Service could compromise forests that meet increasingly vital current and future climate, biodiversity, food security, and public and environmental health needs.

The Midwest and the West diverge widely in terms of their climates, histories and remaining forests. The Forest Service should recognize and account for those differences in their actions and policies.

Letter:

https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbiologicaldiversity.org%2Fprograms%2Fpublic_lands%2Fforests%2Fpdfs%2FEastern-National-Forests-Letter-7-9-24.pdf&data=05%7C02%7CRandy.Moore%40usda.gov%7C717f32d43fd4427dbc8b08dca0671d69%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638561612285238749%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiIl6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdta=rEG%2B%2BuhBFuF2eB6r6P4Y6SUclqo9YAJbky1T4q%2BSNtQ%3D&reserved=0

Yours sincerely,
Robert E. Rutkowski

2527 Faxon Court
Topeka, Kansas 66605-2086
E-mail: r_e_rutkowski@att.net