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Comments: [External Email]Here is my comment on the need to protect mature and old-growth forests

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Mr. Randy Moore of the U.S. Forest Service,

I am VERY lucky in that I've had the opportunity to enjoy the Red Spruce and Cedars of West Virginia, the Paper Birches of Maine, the Balsam Firs of Michigan, the endangered Torrey Pines of California, a virgin Slash Pine forest and Mangroves in Florida, and the rainforest in Puerto Rico, to name just a FEW of my most beloved tree species in my favorite forests.

Yet I've ALSO seen large-scale logging of many gigantic trees in old-growth forests desecrating the landscape of the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River in Quebec, as well as the horrors left behind due to logging throughout West Virginia! I am positive that the money the U.S. Forest Service or other entities might make, from permitting logging, will NEVER make up for the destruction of ecosystems across the United States that have taken hundreds of years to become established. Please see the bigger picture here!

Mature and old-growth forests are a vital part of a healthy planet. They store massive amounts of climate-heating carbon, support healthy watersheds and clean drinking water, survive wildfire better than young forests, and shelter rare and endangered species like spotted owls, wolverines, and bats.

I urge the U.S. Forest Service to significantly strengthen its final record of decision on the national old-growth amendment to (1) ensure meaningful protections for the United States' remaining old-growth forests and (2) lay a foundation that will increase the abundance and distribution of old-growth trees for future generations.

The agency's proposed policy includes numerous loopholes that allow for continued - or even increased - logging of old-growth trees. Logging old-growth trees to save them from potential threats is a false solution. These climate champions are worth more standing.

To successfully protect old-growth forests and trees, the final national old-growth amendment must support a modified ALTERNATIVE THREE that does the following:

- Eliminate exceptions and end ALL logging of old-growth trees in national forests.
- Remove the economic incentive for logging old growth by prohibiting the sale, exchange, and milling of ALL old-growth trees. This should prevent all but truly rare removals of such trees.
- Set the stage for durable protections for mature trees and stands, which is paramount to expanding the

abundance of future old growth. To recover old growth that was lost to past mismanagement, mature forests and trees MUST be protected from commercial logging.

Given the outstanding role mature and old-growth trees and forests play in curbing the climate and extinction crises, the Forest Service must establish *meaningful* safeguards for their conservation. Failure to do so undermines the objectives of this amendment, contravenes the direction of President Biden's Executive Order 14072, and ignores MANY more than half a million public comments the U.S. Forest Service received following the advance notice of proposed rulemaking it published in April 2023.

Chief Moore, I'm counting on YOU to listen to the public and end the commercial exploitation of the country's oldest forests and trees. They should be left standing to store climate-heating carbon, improve watershed health, provide crucial wildlife habitat, increase forest resilience to wildfires, and act as a bulwark against climate-change impacts like flooding and drought.

Sincerely,

Anne S. Eden

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