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Comments: Pacific Northwest forests, particularly old growth forests, are essential to the health of the region and the U.S. Forest Service has a responsibility to maintain or increase the size of these forests, not cut them down. I grew up in Washington State, and spent many hours hiking, camping, and backpacking in these beautiful forests. I have since lived in other parts of the country and only after moving away from the PNW did I realize how unique our forests are. They are irreplaceable and must be nurtured as a public good so that our children and grandchildren can experience them.

From a practical standpoint, maintaining forest health is important to our communities. The tourist revenue from these forests is significant--people from around the world travel to the PNW to hike, camp, ski, and more. If our forests shrink, they will stop visiting and our local economies will suffer, particularly the small businesses and towns that depend on outdoors explorers for their revenue. Since I moved away, the #1 thing people tell me when I say I'm from this region is "oh, it's so beautiful there." Those who've visited the PNW love it for its nature: the forests and mountains, the camping opportunities. Those who haven't been say they want to go and experience this beauty, or their friends have told them it's worthwhile. I hear these comments far more than anything about the cities, the food, or other urban attractions--these forests truly are central to tourists' motivation for visiting. These forests are also critical for our environment and climate. In the U.S., PNW forests are by far the most successful at sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, which helps slow climate change. A 2021 study found that PNW forests sequestered 2.58 tonnes of CO₂ per acre per year, while the second-most was SE forests at 1.42 tonnes/ac/yr. No other part of the country can even come close to the PNW in terms of this impact, so it is important for everyone, not just PNW residents, that these forests be preserved. As our summers get hotter and wildfires spread further and further, it is crucial that we take proactive measures to mitigate climate change, like maintaining large and healthy forests. If the Forest Service proceeds with clear-cutting or logging operations, the total acreage of forests will be far smaller, and replanted areas will have only young monoculture forests that cannot withstand wildfires or infestations of pine beetles (also increasing as warmer winters fail to control beetle populations). With these forms of damage exacerbated by climate change and our forests damaged by logging operations, we will soon see widespread, critical damage to our forests including areas normally used for recreation, or worse, where people live. One of our best defenses against that loss is to not remove or damage forests prematurely.

These forests materially affect all Americans, but especially those who live near them. Logging operations may benefit a few executives in the short term, but they harm all Americans in the long term, both directly for the local residents and indirectly for everyone who lives with worse climate change. The U.S. Forest Service has a responsibility to make decisions in the overall, long-term interest of the American people. You have a responsibility not to proceed with this plan.