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Comments: I am a citizen and a resident of the Pacific Northwest, and I have a great personal interest in preserving and expanding our unique and precious mature and old growth forests. I am also a climate activist, and I have a particular interest in mature and old growth forests for the tremendous carbon sequestration that they provide.

I urge the Forest Service to adopt whatever plan preserves the largest areas of Mature and Old Growth forests. If the proposed amendments reduce our areas of mature and old growth forests, then please keep the original Northwest Forest Plan. We have already lost most of our old Pacific Northwest forests. We simply cannot afford to lose more. We must preserve and maintain what remains, and we must work to restore more forest areas by allowing younger trees to develop into future mature and old growth forests.

Research of our Douglas Fir forests, in studies done by Jerry Franklin and his team in the Andrews Experimental Forest in the Oregon Cascades, for example, demonstrate the complexity, variation, and ecological value of mature and old growth forest habitat. They are valuable for so many other reasons besides their economic timber production.

In an age of extinctions, we need to consider the large and wonderful biodiversity of species found in our oldest forests, including fungi, plants, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Our older forests are also essential for providing protection for clean water, and in an era of climate change, they provide micro-climates protecting forest ecosystems against excessive heat and drought.

As we experience the effects of climate change, the value of our largest and oldest trees for carbon sequestration cannot be overstated. According to an excellent talk I listened to, through the Forest School at the Yale School of the Environment, given in 2024 by Thomas Spies, Emeritus Scientist from the Pacific Northwest Research Station, USDA Forest Service, although young trees accumulate carbon at a faster rate, the old forests we already have are keeping enormous stocks of carbon out of our atmosphere. We cannot convert our old forests to young forests!

We must preserve large expanses of mature and old growth trees so the younger trees can be allowed to mature into the older forests. The larger these expanses, the better. And we need to make sure there are pathways between these expanses for the protection of species as they move between old-forested areas.

We need a diversity of approaches in the Pacific Northwest between the rain forests of the western coastal areas and Cascades, and drier forests east of the Cascades such as the Ponderosa Pine forests. We cannot treat all forest ecosystems the same, for example in our fire management.

Thank-you for reading my comments. Our Pacific Northwest mature and old growth forests are part of our heritage. There are no other places like them in the world. In addition to their essential ecological value, they provide us sacred places in which to renew our spirits.