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Comments: I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to the proposal to open over 800,000 acres of Northwest forests, including old-growth areas, to logging and commercial interests. These forests are invaluable not only to the Pacific Northwest but to the entire planet, and their destruction would have far-reaching consequences.

Key Reasons for Opposition:

1. Carbon Sequestration and Climate Change Mitigation

3. The forests of the Pacific Northwest are among the most carbon-rich ecosystems in the world. Old-growth forests, in particular, are vital carbon sinks that help mitigate climate change by absorbing and storing significant amounts of carbon dioxide. Logging these areas would release stored carbon back into the atmosphere, exacerbating global warming.

2. Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat

These forests are home to thousands of plant and animal species, including many that are threatened or endangered. Mature and old-growth trees provide critical habitats for species like the Northern spotted owl, coastal marten, and red tree vole. Logging would disrupt these ecosystems, threatening wildlife survival.

3. Soil Health and Water Quality

Logging operations severely degrade forest soils through compaction, erosion, and nutrient loss. This damage can persist for decades, reducing forest resilience and impacting water systems with increased sediment loads. Healthy soils are essential for maintaining biodiversity and clean water supplies.

4. Mental Health and Cultural Significance

Beyond their ecological importance, these forests serve as places of refuge for human mental health and hold spiritual significance for Indigenous communities who have stewarded them for generations. Destroying these areas would erase irreplaceable cultural and recreational value.

5. Economic Short-Sightedness

While timber production may provide short-term economic gains, it undermines long-term ecological services such as carbon storage, clean water supply, and tourism opportunities tied to pristine wilderness areas.

This proposal threatens one of the most ecologically valuable regions in the United States. I urge everyone to submit comments opposing this plan on the U.S. Forest Service website before the March 17th deadline.

Let's stand together to protect these irreplaceable forests for future generations.