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Comments: Publicly owned national forests of the Pacific Northwest are essential to storing and sequestering atmospheric carbon for long periods of time. Our mature and old growth forests store more carbon per acre than the Amazon. The greatest threat to old growth and mature forests is logging. I believe we must protect and preserve our public forests.

We own 40 acres in Linn County, Oregon. Our farm provides specialty vegetable seeds that are distributed to gardeners and farmers throughout the U.S. and in Europe. In years when it does not get scorching hot we provide peaches to the local fresh market. Half of the farm we manage for wildlife habitat. We remove invasive species like Himalayan Blackberry and Poison Hemlock and plant native trees and shrubs. We protect stands of mature Maple, Ash, Cottonwood and Willow along the creek and wetlands. There are songbirds, mammals, and frogs that take refuge here.

We have camped and hiked and drifted the rivers in public forests of the Pacific Northwest for decades. The life supporting forest air quality make nurturing places that are contributing to my health and wellbeing in my senior years. These forests must be there for my grandsons and all of our grand children in their old age.

Mature and old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest rainforests support understories of a great variety of plants and downed wood that store clean water, reduce flood erosion, and provide refuge for wild life and people. They can do this only if their complex structure above and below ground is protected from logging.

Large trees of the Pacific Northwest are fire resistant and shelter surface fuels and vegetation from sun and wind. Logging those trees increases hazardous fuels conditions. Commercial logging makes flammable slash, prompts the growth of flammable grasses and invasive weeds and makes the stand hotter, drier, windier. Fuel and fire management should focus on reducing hazards within the home ignition zone using non-commercial treatments including prescribed burning, not commercial logging.

Tribal fire management programs used by the Tribal wildland fire workforce should be increased to protect mature and old growth forests from wildfires. It is more effective to protect forests through proactive prescribed burns than to bulldoze, fellerbunch, chemically retard, and backburn in the face of a wildfire. These aggressive firefighting tactics are a desperate last resort and degrade forest land.

The 2023 IPCC Report makes it clear that there is a rapidly closing window of time for us to preserve our natural ecosystems including mature forests and their streams and rivers. The choices we make now will impact the planet for thousands of years.