



Our mission is to connect people to the natural world and cultivate a community of environmental stewards working together to build a greener and healthier planet through advocacy, action, and education.

June 28, 2022

Via Regular U.S. Mail and E-Mail (ron_wyden@wyden.senate.gov)

Honorable Senator Ron Wyden
911 NE 11th Ave., Suite 630
Portland, OR, 97232

Re: *Codify the Protection of Big Trees*

Dear Senator Wyden:

The time for action is now.

Recently the USFS allowed big mature ponderosa pines near a popular bike trail in the Deschutes National Forest (DNF) to be cut, in the name of “forest restoration” and “fire risk prevention.” We recently met with Holly Jewkes, the DNF Supervisor, and her team, to discuss her wildly unpopular decision.

At issue was whether, after reviewing the law, the applicable rule of decision and updated science, in a project that authorized the thinning of over 24,000 acres of forest during a climate emergency, with atmospheric levels of CO2 dangerously high, at a time when biodiversity and freshwater reserves are plummeting -- did the USFS in retrospect believe that they had made a *mistake* when they decided to authorize the cutting of at least 30, large fire-resistant ponderosa pine?

Their answer? “No. We followed the law.” We disagree, but for sake of argument, if they are correct, and they followed the law, and the law allows our national forest trustees to cut big, CO2 scrubbing, shade giving, soil cooling, fire-resistant mature trees during a climate catastrophe, *then the law is wrong*. And it needs *changing*. And that’s *your* job.

Policies not rooted in measurable standards inevitably lead to abuse. If the policy is to restore forest health and reduce wildfire risk, while at the same time reversing global warming, then we can’t allow the USFS to have unbridled “flexibility” when they mark trees for “thinning.” We need an ironclad rule that’s enforceable. It’s time to wipe away the stain left by our anti-science and anti-environment former President who abolished the East Side Screens on his way out the door.

This is a moment in history when we need you to legislate, not issue an alarming press release or give a rousing speech. If following a law leads to the ruination of all, then the law must be changed. We know how much you love clean air, water, biodiversity and healthy forests. We know how much you want to protect the welfare of future generations. And we know you want to build hope, especially during a time of despair. This is your time and your calling.

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Please bring back the USDA rule that protects from the thinning-industrial-complex the removal of mature trees greater than 21" dbh. If you can't persuade the Biden Administration to move forward administratively to protect mature trees, then work your colleagues to pass a law that provides strong and specific protections. The law should presume that every tree greater than 21" dbh is off limits and shift the burden to the USFS to show the public why an exception should be made. Please speak for the big trees.

Sincerely,

Roger Worthington, Esq.
President
The Worthy Garden Club

cc: The Oregon Congressional Delegation