



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.

March 15, 2024

Via Regular U.S. and E-Mail

Honorable Senator Jeff Merkley  
Honorable Senator Ron Wyden  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

***Re: Protect Big Trees on Federal Lands from Logging***

Dear Senators Merkley and Wyden:

I am asking for your help in protecting our mature and old growth trees on Federal lands during an escalating climate crisis.

A few weeks ago a group of 195 distinguished scientists sent a letter to President Biden asking him to protect mature and old growth forests. The group includes Oregon State's Dr. Beverly Law and Dr. Bill Ripple. It also includes several prominent climate scientists, including Dr. James Hansen and Dr. Michael Mann. The scientists make the case that imposing a moratorium on cutting down mature and old growth trees on Federal lands is perhaps our best natural solution to sequestering atmospheric carbon. See: <https://www.woodwellclimate.org/ban-logging-federal-mature-forests/>

As the attorney for Multnomah County in a climate accountability lawsuit pending in Portland, I wholeheartedly agree with efforts, like this one, to cool off the planet, protect the public coffers, prevent foreseeable catastrophes and save lives.

I am asking you to send a letter to the White House and the leadership of the Council on Environmental Quality, the Office of Science Technology and Policy and the Office of Management and Budget urging them to engage and ensure that the United States Forest Service adopts the necessary regulations to protect mature and old growth forests. I understand that the Forest Service does not appear to be willing to take the necessary steps consistent with the best available science to properly define and protect mature and old growth forests.

Our children, as well as our grandparents, are counting on your support. Thanks for your continued engagement on these issues and I look forward to hearing from you soon. We are running out of time.

Protect Big Trees on Federal Lands from Logging

March 15, 2024

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Sincerely,

*Roger Worthington*

Roger Worthington, Esq.

President

Worthy Garden Club

cc: Governor Tina Kotek in care of Karin Power  
Cong. Andrea Salinas  
Cong. Val Hoyle  
Cong. Suzanne Bonamici  
Cong. Earl Blumenauer

*Enclosures:*

*Letter to President Biden (February 27, 2024)*

*Letter to Secretary Vilsack (November 10, 2021)*

Feb 27, 2024 (updated from Jan 31, 2024)

President Joe Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Cc: Ali Zaidi, National Climate Advisor, The White House; Stephenne Harding, Council on Environmental Quality; Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture; Deb Haaland, Secretary of Interior

Re: Request for an Executive Order to Place a Moratorium on Logging Mature and Old-Growth Forests, and Large Trees Generally, on National Forests and BLM Lands While the Old Growth EIS Proceeds

Dear President Biden:

We are scientists with backgrounds in forest ecosystems, climate change, and natural resources writing in response to the December 20, 2023 Notice of Intent for a National Old Growth Amendment in the Federal Register (Federal Register, Vol. 88. No. 243). We applaud your Executive Order 14008 directing federal agencies to protect 30% of the nation's lands and waters by 2030, and Executive Order 14072 directing the national inventory of mature and old-growth forests for conservation purposes, most of which are on National Forests and BLM lands. Because of the [global loss](#) of [mature and old-growth](#) forests, and [large trees](#) generally, and their [importance](#) in [mitigating](#) the climate and [biodiversity crisis](#) on federal lands, we fully support calls by fellow scientists for a [moratorium](#) on logging in these critically important forests. Therefore, we request that you now direct the Forest Service and BLM to suspend all timber sales in mature and old-growth forests, and refrain from proposing new timber sales in these forests, while the federal agencies develop their Environmental Impact Statements that best comply with Executive Order 14072 in securing a national network of conservation areas.

We are concerned that the Administration's proposed old-growth Amendment "does not alter or prescribe any substantive standards for the management of old growth forests" that in the meantime remain vulnerable to [dozens of timber sales](#) nationally and efforts by the Forest Service to increase logging of these forests before any substantive conservation takes hold. We are also concerned that the proposed Amendment excludes mature forests and includes a loophole that would allow logging of old-growth forests under certain conditions. Additionally, based on an independent inventory of mature and old-growth forests in the conterminous United States, and the [Tongass rainforest](#) in Alaska, more than 50 million acres of mature and old-growth forests are [vulnerable](#) to logging. In particular, the Amendment [exempts](#) the Tongass, the nation's highest concentration of old-growth forests and [forest carbon](#), from further analysis, which is inconsistent with your efforts to transition this forest out of old-growth logging.

The [Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#) was signed by 141 countries, including the United States, at the COP26. The declaration pledges to end global deforestation and **forest degradation** by 2030 (emphasis added). Additionally, the United States is committed to the [Paris Climate Agreement](#) that "encourages Parties to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of GHGs that are referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1(d) of the Convention, **including forests**" (emphasis added). Following through on these commitments in practice is [crucial for climate change mitigation](#).

Logging and associated road building in mature and old-growth forests and the removal of large trees on federal lands is the main form of **forest degradation** and is therefore inconsistent with your global commitments and relevant executive orders. We ask that you lead by example in signaling to the world that the United States takes its commitment seriously in halting the global biodiversity and climate crises

by now directing federal agencies to enact the strongest protections for the nation's mature and old-growth forests and large trees as natural climate solutions and a flagship initiative of your [roadmap for nature-based solutions](#). Doing so will be a legacy gift of your Administration to the nation and the planet.

Sincerely,

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Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2021

Secretary Tom Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to respectfully request that you revise the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) new Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan to include recommendations to conserve mature and old growth forests on National Forest System lands as a central climate strategy. Protecting older, carbon-rich forests is a simple and cost-effective strategy for mitigating climate change and adapting to future climate impacts. USDA has already recognized these values in the Tongass National Forest, as demonstrated by your commitment to end large-scale old growth logging. We appreciate that the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan highlights the importance of strategic implementation of hazardous fuel treatments and prescribed fire to reduce wildfire risks and to increase forest restoration. However, in light of the worsening climate crisis, it is imperative that the U.S. expand that effort and optimize the climate value of mature and old growth forests throughout the country.

The impacts of climate change are becoming more dire, with observable effects already occurring in every corner of the country and impacts disproportionately borne by our most vulnerable communities. Our ability to pull carbon from the atmosphere and store it for the long term will play a major role in determining the severity of the future impacts of climate change. It will take time and significant federal investment to decarbonize the electricity sector and electrify the transportation sector. Protecting our natural carbon sinks represents a more straightforward climate solution that can be implemented much sooner.

Mature forests are also an invaluable climate adaptation tool. The extensive root systems of older forests slow and filter rain, prevent erosion, and help reduce the risk of flooding in watersheds across the country. The thick bark and tall trunks of mature forests also helps separate the forest canopy from fast moving fires along the ground, making older forests more resistant to wildfire impacts. Current logging practices can have long-term detrimental impacts on hydrology and

watershed health, underscoring the need to conserve remaining mature and old growth in essential watersheds.

Allowing logging of mature and old federal forests should become a practice of the past. Logging the last remaining mature and old growth forests in the U.S. would undermine the objectives laid out in President Biden's Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad* and his administration's efforts to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030 for biodiversity conservation and urgent climate mitigation action. In the U.S. National Determined Contribution announced earlier this year, the administration specifically recommended forest protections as a key climate strategy. We urge USDA to follow through on these commitments by ensuring mature and old growth protections are central to the agency's climate strategy.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

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