

May 26, 2023

U.S. Forest Service  
Director, Policy Office  
201 14th Street S  
Mailstop 1108, Washington, DC 20250-1124



Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Thank you for requesting public input on how the Forest Service should foster ecosystem resilience and climate resilience on federal forest lands. To meet President Biden's goals for tackling the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis, it is imperative that both agencies prioritize the protection of mature and old-growth forests and trees.

Olympic Climate Action represents more than 800 residents of the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State who are concerned about the burgeoning climate crisis and are trying to do something about it. This statement has been unanimously approved by our Board of Directors.

As your agency has identified, older forests and trees are crucial for addressing our climate crisis. These trees and stands store the vast majority of the above ground carbon in a forest. In addition, older forests and trees are far more adaptable to the impacts of climate change, especially compared to industrial tree plantations. Nationally, carbon losses from clearcuts and other logging are up to 5 times higher than emissions from fire and other natural forest disturbances combined. Logging older forests grossly undercuts these benefits and threatens our communities.

In the counties we represent, net emissions from logging activities (incorporating both regrowth and storage in products/landfills) far exceed all other emissions, and the losses are particularly critical on our older forests. We cannot meet our local mitigation goals without cooperation from the federal government. It has long been recognized that Natural Climate Solutions are essential for us to reach net zero, and protecting our older forests is the most immediate action we can take in that regard.

Our older forests are also critical for addressing the biodiversity crisis. These complex ecosystems provide vital and unique habitats for birds up above, critters down below and everything in between. Intact forested watersheds produce very high quality water vital for aquatic life in the forest and those who depend on it downstream. Our iconic salmon, orcas, and other endangered species depend on our forests and the myriad ecosystem services they provide, and protecting these forests will be an essential component of local climate resiliency.

***Our mission:*** We seek a safe, prosperous, sustainable future for residents of the Olympic Peninsula by addressing the threat of climate change. [www.olyclimate.org](http://www.olyclimate.org)



We urge you to include in any future administrative rules an end to ecologically harmful logging of mature and old growth forests and trees on federal land. While there are certainly other threats to our older forests, including wildfire and drought, the threat of logging is fully under your control and can be quickly acted on.

Please act quickly to protect mature forests and trees both for their current important values and so they can grow to become old growth and continue their work to help mitigate the climate crisis, contribute to healthy watersheds and provide ecosystem resilience. These forests are worth more standing.

Sincerely,

Ed Chadd, Forests & Climate Chair,  
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