



February 10, 2023

Dear Senators and Congressional Representatives for Oregon and Washington:

We are members of Great Old Broads for Wilderness, among seven chapters in Oregon and Washington, representing over 1600 of your constituents. We are contacting you to share our concern for protection of mature and old growth forests and trees in the Pacific Northwest, for their high capacity for storing and sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change. In addition, these trees are more resilient to wildfires, and thus their protection is a valuable strategy for reducing wildfire impacts. Here in the Pacific Northwest, protecting trees that are 80 years or older is important for ecosystem function. An 80-year-old conifer can live for hundreds of more years, absorbing more and more carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in its wood, roots, soil, and supporting diverse wildlife. These are among the most carbon-rich forests in the world, holding more carbon per acre than tropical rainforests. Nowhere else in the *world* are there so many different species of big, long-lived conifers together in one place as in the Pacific Northwest.

**We are asking the Biden Administration to proceed with national rulemaking to protect mature and old growth (MOG) forests and trees in federal forests from logging.** We request that you support this effort for reasons illustrated below and fleshed out in the attached fact sheet with scientific citations.

**Carbon storage and sequestration, climate mitigation.** Mature and old growth trees sequester and store the most carbon, thus mitigating carbon emissions and reducing climate change impacts.

**Carbon loss in wildfires and post-fire logging.** Even in severe wildfires only a small portion of the carbon is released to the atmosphere. Much more carbon is lost if burned forests are subjected to post-fire logging, which also impairs forest regeneration and does not reduce the risk of future fires.

**Wildfire risk reduction.** The western Pacific Northwest forests have a lower risk of wildfire than other US forests. The older trees, mature and old growth, are the most fire-resistant.

Logging mature and old growth trees does not reduce wildfire risk, as these are the most fire-resistant trees. Forest management for wildfire protection is most effective in the 60-100 feet zone from structures, “defensible space”: the home outward strategy.

**Threats to mature and old growth forests.** The primary threat to mature and older forests is logging, not wildfire or climate change. There are nearly 11 million acres of MOG forests on federal lands in Oregon and Washington. Despite the important role they play in carbon storage and climate mitigation only 24% are fully protected from logging.

Dr. Beverly Law has said. "We are in the midst of a climate crisis and a biodiversity crisis. Preserving these forests is one of the greatest things we can do in our region of North America to help on both fronts." We hope you will join us in demanding the best available science be utilized in establishing permanent protection of mature and old growth forests on federal lands, for climate mitigation and wildfire risk reduction—along with many ancillary benefits such as biodiversity and drinking water protection.

Our members would **welcome the opportunity to meet with you** or your staff to discuss forest protection and your positions. Please feel free to reach out to the Great Old Broads leader representing your district to set something up, and expect us to follow up within a few weeks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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