

December 19, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of many of the country's leading philanthropic institutions, we commend the Biden-Harris Administration on the release of today's **Notice of Intent and National Old Growth Forest Plan Amendment**. We are firmly committed to ensuring our treasured Federal forests will continue to provide clean water, clean air, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and recreation benefits now and for future generations of Americans. We support the plan amendment's aims to maintain, develop, and expand the abundance and distribution of old growth forests, as well as critical mature forests that will become the next generation of old growth, as a robust beginning to strengthening US Forest Service policies. Moreover, the plan's focus on deepening adaptive management, monitoring, and evaluation approaches are key components to a national forest plan that centers climate resilience in the face of changing conditions and shifting ecological systems.

Including the requirement that each National Forest's strategy employ Indigenous Knowledge is a testament to this Administration's recognition that this is one of the many important knowledge systems that contribute to the well-being of the United States and to the collective understanding of the natural world. The commitment to requiring co-stewardship opportunities is an important step toward fulfilling the trust responsibility to Indian Tribes in the stewardship of federal lands and waters—policies that our institutions have supported with our grantmaking over the past several years.

In conclusion, we applaud the Biden-Harris Administration for taking this historic first step towards protecting our nation's old growth forests to ensure they endure into the future. Please find below a selection of supportive quotes from a range of philanthropic institutions.

Fred Ackerman-Munson, Executive Director, 444S Foundation: "It is so critical that we protect not just our remaining old growth forests, but also the mature forests that will become old growth forests soon. We applaud the Administration for recognizing the importance of protecting "future old growth forests" in its first of a kind National Forest Plan Amendment proposal. And we are heartened that, in the interim, any logging in old growth forests now must be reviewed and approved before proceeding."

Shoren Brown, Vice President, Public Affairs, Conservation Alliance: “Old growth and mature forests aren’t just good for storing carbon, they provide jobs. Outdoor recreation on national public lands supports 4.6 million jobs in the outdoor industry. The Conservation Alliance and our member companies thank the Biden Administration for valuing our forests and protecting the next generation of old forests yet to come.”

Sam Gill, President and CEO, Doris Duke Foundation: Safeguarding forest health and resilience in the face of changing climate and conditions, so that they can continue sustaining wildlife, carbon sequestration, water supplies and local economies, is an urgent challenge. We applaud the Biden-Harris Administration’s actions, through the National Old Growth Forest Plan Amendment, to secure our most critical national forest areas and ensure that they are adaptively stewarded for long-term health and resilience through science-based, climate-smart approaches.

Julia Bator, Executive Director, J.M. Kaplan Fund: “The J.M. Kaplan Fund supports the protection of old growth and mature forests as critical agents for carbon sequestration and mitigating climate change. We applaud the Administration for making a commitment to advance this vital work.”

Al Jubitz, Jubitz Family Foundation: “I am personally excited that President Biden is moving forward with cataloging and preserving old growth and mature forests on our public lands. Forest Service lands supply drinking water for one in five Americans. Where they remain, old forests protect the headwaters of many streams and rivers. These places provide vital spawning habitat for species like salmon and benefit biodiversity overall. Old Growth Forests are the bedrock of a healthy watershed and serve humans and wildlife alike. Thank you President Biden for moving toward protecting these irreplaceable assets.”

Bill Lazar, Lazar Foundation: “We have dedicated our family Foundation’s assets for decades to protect our prized forests here in the Pacific Northwest. Mature forests are tomorrow’s old growth. To meet our climate goals and to enhance biological diversity, we need to protect these forests so they can benefit humanity in the years to come. I look forward to working with the Administration to protect our mature and old growth forests across the U.S.”

Ryan Gellert, CEO, Patagonia: "We applaud the Biden administration for recognizing the importance of mature and old-growth forests and taking steps to inventory and protect them. Much of Patagonia's business depends on the health of wild places that our customers explore, including national forests. Trees are also a key solution to the climate crisis because they store most of the above-ground carbon in a forest and preserve biodiversity. We look forward to working with the administration to ensure strong protections for mature and old-growth trees."

Marcia Argust, Director, The Pew Charitable Trusts: "The Pew Charitable Trusts supports the Forest Service's pursuit of this generational opportunity to improve our treasured national forests," said Marcia Argust, a director with The Pew Charitable Trusts' U.S. conservation project. "This proposal adopts a climate-informed approach that will sustain forest health and resilience into the future by aligning management with a modern scientific understanding of forest dynamics and the benefits derived from a robust network of healthy old-growth forests."

Eric Artz, President and CEO, REI Co-op: "REI Co-op has advocated for the stewardship of our public lands for over eight decades. Protecting our national forests allows our natural spaces to sequester carbon, improves nearby watersheds and strengthens local economies. Old growth forests provide essential benefits like carbon sequestration, clean water, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity. We thank the Biden Administration for preserving these spaces, which will keep our forests and communities healthy for generations to come."

Avi Garbow, President, Resources Legacy Fund: "Resources Legacy Fund supports President Biden's executive order advancing "climate smart" protection of America's forests. The Administration's new plan to implement this EO strategically expands the nation's arsenal in the ongoing battle against climate change and biodiversity loss by conserving mature and old growth trees on US federal lands in California and across the country. This will sequester carbon and protect wildlife, watersheds, and communities. In California, we must pursue this effort through a robust collaboration that includes the state, Tribes, and other stakeholders, to develop science-based forest conservation and restoration strategies that reduce the risks of climate-driven wildfires. RLF looks forward to working with the Biden Administration—including the Interior and Agricultural departments, the US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management—to bring this historic presidential action to fruition."

Birch Beaudet, Executive Director, Wilburforce Foundation: We applaud the Biden Administration's recognition of the irreplaceable value of current and future old growth forests to both wild and human communities: clean water, clean air, carbon storage, biodiversity, and essential fish and wildlife habitat, as well as healthy and robust local economies. We are highly supportive of the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge systems alongside western science as a means to ensure the highest standards of stewardship of our shared natural systems. We look forward to working with the Administration to advance forest and wildlife habitat protections and resilience throughout the West.