

For Immediate Release

Over 200 Top U.S. Climate and Forest Scientists Urge Congress: Protect Forests to Mitigate Climate Crisis

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As multiple current legislative proposals attempt to shoehorn measures that would increase logging, or increase funding for logging, into COVID-19 stimulus packages, over 200 top U.S. climate and forest scientists are now asking Congressional leaders to avoid using the pandemic emergency as a means for stripping away forest protections and promoting logging. In a historic and unprecedented letter sent to Congress today, the scientists conclude that, in order to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis, moving beyond fossil fuel consumption is not enough, and we must also increase forest protections and shift away from energy-intensive and greenhouse-gas polluting wood consumption.

The scientists note that annual carbon emissions from logging in U.S. forests are comparable to emissions from the residential and commercial sectors combined. They ask legislators to reject false climate solutions that promote forest biomass logging (removal and incineration of trees for energy production) under the guise of “climate-friendly” or “carbon neutral” energy or logging for cross-laminated timber (CLT) and other wood products under the guise of carbon storage. Most of the carbon in trees is removed from forests when they are logged and quickly ends up in the atmosphere or in landfills, they caution. The scientists also note that logging, including commercial “thinning,” can often increase fire intensity in forests, while damaging soils and removing vital nutrients, which undermines the carbon sequestration and storage capacity of forests.

“Forests are our only means for removing atmospheric carbon dioxide and storing the carbon long term at the needed scale. Burning wood in place of coal is accelerating global warming and decreasing the capacity of forests to counter the buildup of heat trapping carbon dioxide,” said Dr. William Moomaw of Tufts University. Dr. Chad Hanson, a forest ecologist with the John Muir Project, observed, “The dangerous excess CO₂ that we’ve put into the atmosphere with fossil fuel consumption and logging will stay there for far too long if we don’t take serious steps to bring it down, and forest protection is our best and most effective way to do that.” Dr. Dominick DellaSala, Chief Scientist with the Geos Institute, added, “The vast majority of scientists warn that in order to avoid catastrophic climate impacts in the decades ahead, including new pandemics potentially linked to deforestation, we need to keep dinosaur-carbon in the ground and store atmospheric carbon in forests.”