

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE--LOGGING HALTED IN YOSEMITE

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5 July 2022--Destructive commercial logging has, for now, been halted in Yosemite National Park's wildlands, under an agreement reached between John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute (www.johnmuirproject.org) and Yosemite National Park. The agreement, announced today, requires the Park to comply with its own Fire Management Plan, which determined that the most effective, science-based approach is to use wildland fire and prescribed fire in 99% of the Park, while allowing some thinning and removal of dead trees adjacent to communities in 1% of the Park. It will remain in place at least until the federal district court in Fresno issues a ruling on plaintiff's motion for a preliminary injunction, and allows the court time to consider legal briefs and argument, a process that may take approximately two months.

On June 13, 2022, John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute, represented by Earthrise Law Center at Lewis & Clark Law School, filed suit against Yosemite National Park in opposition to a large commercial logging project that the Park had authorized and begun to implement along dozens of miles of roads and in two giant sequoia groves. The Park did so without complying with its own Fire Management Plan, without public notice or comment, and without any environmental analysis of the potential for the logging to increase wildfire intensity and threats to communities, or analysis of the harm to endangered species, like the Pacific fisher and Great gray owl. Over 200 of the nation's top climate scientists and ecologists recently warned the Biden Administration and Congress that commercial logging conducted under the guise of "thinning" does not stop climate-driven wildfires and often makes them burn more intensely toward homes, while worsening climate change (<https://bit.ly/3BFtIAg>), as noted in the plaintiff's complaint, legal brief, and other filings. Most science also finds that, contrary to popular misconceptions, dead trees ("snags") do not increase fire intensity, and snag forest habitat is essential for many native wildlife species, such as woodpeckers, bluebirds, and owls, among many others.

"Focusing fire-safe work adjacent to homes is the right way to go," said Dr. Chad Hanson, research ecologist with the John Muir Project. "But out in the wildlands, lightning-ignited fires, and patches of snag forest, are ecologically beneficial and essential for our forests. So many of our past assumptions have been upended. We know now that historical forests were much denser than previously believed, with over 200 trees per acre *on average*, and fire behavior is driven by weather and climate, and pine needles and twigs on the forest floor, not the density of forests or the amount of dead trees."

Earthrise Law Center attorney Tom Buchele added, "We are pleased that the Park Service and its attorneys were willing to work with us to avoid the need for a temporary restraining order. The agreed order allows the Park Service to continue implementing its decision in areas consistent with its own 2017 Fire Plan Amendments where its actions will provide the greatest protections to communities from fires and prevents logging in the areas where further implementation would cause the greatest irreparable harm to my client's members and the Park's forests."