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Biden Old-Growth Amendment is Commercial Logging Plan in Disguise

The Biden Administration pledged to protect remaining old-growth forests on federal public lands, but this morning's release of the long-awaited Old-Growth Amendment Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) revealed something very different. The Draft EIS explicitly promotes widespread commercial logging in old-growth forests, so long as the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), with a wink and a nod, claims they are logging old-growth forests for wildfire management, forest health, or public safety. These are the very same logging euphemisms that the USFS has been using, and abusing, for years.

Shockingly, the proposed alternative, Alternative 2, even allows logging of mature and old-growth trees within old-growth forests. The Draft EIS attempts to justify this by claiming that, supposedly, mature/old trees may sometimes need to be removed before wildland fire use or prescribed fire can be effectively conducted--a claim that is directly contradicted by decades of studies from the USFS's own scientists, along with recent admissions by the USFS that there is no need to remove any trees, large or small, prior to conducting prescribed burning. A large and growing body of [science](#), including many studies from USFS scientists, finds that logging conducted under the guise of "thinning" makes the forest microclimate hotter, drier, and windier, and actually exacerbates wildfire behavior. This puts communities at greater risk, as we saw tragically this week in Ruidoso, New Mexico, and as we saw in 2018 in Paradise, California, and in 2021 in Grizzly Flats, California. Even the [USFS's own scientists](#) found that denser mature/old forests burn *less* intensely, not more.

The Biden Administration specifically chose not to designate Alternative 3--which would prohibit commercial logging in old-growth forests--as the preferred alternative. [Over 200 U.S. scientists](#) recently sent a letter to the Administration urging complete protection from logging for all mature and old-growth forests on public lands, which the Administration ignored.

“This is just a logging plan,” said Dr. Chad Hanson, Research Ecologist with the John Muir Project.

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