

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned North Carolina-based organizations, are writing to urge your administration to enact the strongest possible protections for mature and old-growth trees and forests on federal lands. These forests and trees are better at absorbing and storing carbon than younger forests and trees and provide benefits such as fostering a diverse ecosystem.

North Carolina's forests are a vital part of our natural heritage. We take great pride in our beautiful landscape, including our gorgeous and diverse forests. From the whitewater falls in Nantahala to the mile-high peaks and forested slopes of Pisgah, our national forests are a big part of what makes North Carolina such an amazing place to live and visit.

Our forests provide habitat for many species including the Eastern Box Turtle, American Black Bear and the endangered Northern Saw-whet Owl. North Carolina is suffering from the effects of climate change including rising sea levels on our coast, dangerously hot summers, and more extreme weather patterns which lead to increased droughts and flooding. We have already lost nearly all of our old-growth forests in North Carolina. In the face of biodiversity loss and worsening climate change, we cannot afford to lose our mature trees and forests as well.

Our mature forests provide space for outdoor recreational activity and protect the natural environment through being a vital part of our ecosystem. Natural, diverse forests consist of a variety of ages of trees. [Less than 1% of trees on the East Coast have lived to "old-growth" age](#), a huge divergence from the natural state of this region. If we don't protect mature and old-growth trees from logging, it will take decades to hundreds of years to grow them back. These crucial natural resources should be protected for the treasures they are.

That's why it is so important that projects which allow logging of old and mature trees, such as the Buck and Southside projects in the Nantahala National Forest, cease.

The Buck Project is [one of the largest timber sales in North Carolina in recent history](#), threatening 150 acres of trees more than 100 years old and 375 acres of mature carbon-dense rich cove forests. An estimated 60% of the forest area targeted for logging in the [Southside Project](#) is more than [100 years old](#), and the old growth trees on top of Brushy Mountain have been around for over [200 years](#). These projects trade critical, life sustaining organisms for short-term economic gain. North Carolina's mature and old growth trees and forests are worth more standing.

Two years ago, you signed [Executive Order 14072](#) directing federal agencies to inventory mature and old-growth forests on U.S. federal lands and to develop policies to protect them.

We welcomed the notice of intent from the US Forest Service to develop a National Old-Growth Amendment. However, protections for our mature and old-growth forests could and should still be stronger than what is being proposed.

Specifically, we are urging your administration to:

1. Prohibit the sale of logged old-growth for any reason.
2. Expand the Amendment to include protection for mature trees and forests. This is particularly important for North Carolina's forests which have very little old-growth. Without protections for mature trees and forests, the Forest Service will continue to allow our oldest trees to be logged.

We deeply appreciate your ongoing commitment and leadership in protecting America's forests and addressing the climate crisis and look forward to ensuring that mature and old-growth trees will remain protected for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Environment North Carolina

Friends of Big Ivy

Chattooga Conservancy

I Heart Pisgah

Forest Keeper

North Carolina Chapter, The Sierra Club

Haw River Assembly

North Carolina League of Conservation Voters

North Carolina Alliance to Protect Our People and the Places We Live

Appalachian Voices

The Forest Foundation, Inc.

Dogwood Alliance

CleanAIRE NC

MountainTrue

Carolina Advocates for Climate, Health, and Equity

Climate Action NC

Toward Zero Waste