

To: Secretary Vilsack, USDA
Chief Moore, USFS
Cc: John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy
Chair Mallory, CEQ
Re: Flat Country Project Withdrawal
Date: January 25th, 2023

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Chief Moore,

Our organizations are writing to commend the U.S. Forest Service and Biden Administration for withdrawing the Willamette National Forest January 2021 Record of Decision for the Flat Country Project on the McKenzie River Ranger District.

The withdrawal is a reprieve for approximately 4,500 acres of forest on federally-managed public lands, including over 2,200 acres of mature (80-120 year old) and old-growth (120+ year old) forest. Conserving these lands will support the Forest Service's climate and ecological objectives.

We urge the Forest Service to implement President Biden's executive order to conserve mature and old-growth forests by promulgating (along with the Bureau of Land Management) a strong and enduring rule. A durable forest carbon protection rule would create a strong presumption against removing mature trees across federal forests. And it would allow the agencies to continue pursuing goals such as fire risk reduction, including by removing younger trees.

As the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are making plans now to spend \$5 billion in funds authorized by Congress in recent legislation for forest management, there is great urgency to create a safety net to protect mature and old-growth trees and stands as envisioned by President Biden's Executive Order 14072. The type of logging proposed in Flat Country — and in [numerous other mature and old-growth projects](#) across the country — must become a practice of the past.

Mature and old-growth trees and forests store the vast majority of carbon on the landscape and preserve ecological integrity to allow for improved watershed function, air quality, and habitat connectivity. Historical and ongoing logging have led to a deficit of mature trees and forests across the country, but federal forests retain important expanses. A nationwide rule would prevent the wasted agency resources and controversy of projects like Flat Country, where the Forest Service needed to withdraw the ROD. Focusing on trees and stands under 80 years old will not prevent the Forest Service from providing timber to support communities and pursuing various restoration strategies while preserving the majority of the carbon on the landscape.

The decision to withdraw Flat Country is a welcome example of the type of leadership the public expects when it comes to public lands and environmental protection. By promulgating a rule to safeguard carbon and other values in mature and old-growth forests on federal lands, the Biden Administration and U.S. Forest Service can leave a lasting legacy for future generations of Americans.

Sincerely,

350 Eugene	Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Oregon
350 Rutland County	Interfaith Power and Light
350 Salem OR	Endangered Species Coalition
350 Seattle	Environment America
350 Spokane	Environment Oregon
350 Washington County	Environmental Law & Policy Center
350PDX	Extinction Rebellion PDX (XRPDX)
Applegate Siskiyou Alliance	Faiths4Future
Aspen Center for Environmental Studies	Forest Keeper
California Environmental Voters	Forest Web
Californians for Western Wilderness	Foundation Earth
Cascadia Climate Action Now	Friends of Big Ivy
Cascadia Wildlands	Friends of Douglas-fir National Monument
CedarAction	Friends of the Bitterroot
Chattooga Conservancy	Gallatin Wildlife Association
Climate Reality Project	Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance
Climate Reality Project, Portland Chapter	Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Climate Reality Project, Riverside County, CA Chapter	Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Bozeman Broadband
Climate Writers	Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Cascade Volcanoes Chapter
Coast Range Association	Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Central Oregon Bitterbrush Broads Chapter
Conservation Northwest	Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Willamette Valley Broadband
Creation Justice Ministries	Green Cove Defense Committee
Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance	Green Snohomish
Earth Ethics, Inc.	GreenLatinos
Earth Neighborhood Productions	I Heart Pisgah
Earthjustice	Inland Ocean Coalition
EcoFlight	

Interfaith Earthkeepers Eugene/Springfield
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Kentucky Heartwood
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Kitsap Environmental Coalition
KS Connectivity
KS Wild
League Of Women Voters of Oregon
Metro Climate Action Team
Natural Resources Defense Council
Natural Resources Law
NE Forest Watch
New Jersey Forest Watch
North Cascades Conservation Council
Northwest Montana Great Old Broads for
Wilderness
Ohio Environmental Council
Old-Growth Forest Network
Olympic Forest Coalition
Oregon Unitarian Universalist Voices for
Justice
Oregon Wild
Peoples Voice on Climate
San Juan Citizens Alliance

Save Public Forests
Sierra Club
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
South Umpqua Rural Community
Partnership
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Standing Trees
SunrisePDX
Sustainable Rogue Valley
Tennessee Scenic River Association
The Forest Advocate
Thurston Climate Action Team
Treekeepers of Washington County
Umpqua Watersheds
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
Vermonters for a Clean Environment
Water League
Waterway Advocates
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Heritage, a Project of Earth Island
Institute
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlands Network
Williams Community Forest Project
Yaak Valley Forest Council