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**Biden action to preserve our climate forests a first step, but more is needed**

Washington — Today, President Biden will sign an [executive order](#) laying the groundwork for protecting mature and old-growth trees in America’s national forests, promoting reforestation partnerships, combatting global deforestation, and enlisting nature in addressing the climate crisis. The responsibility now falls to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of the Interior to quickly develop policies protecting mature and old-growth forests from threats such as logging that will stand as a global model for forest protection.

Forests — particularly older forests — store vast amounts of carbon and continue absorbing carbon as they age. Logging trees in these areas release most of that carbon back into the atmosphere. Even under the best-case scenario, newly planted forests would not re-absorb this carbon for decades or centuries — timescales irrelevant to avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. Older trees and forests are also naturally more fire-resistant. And they help limit the impacts of climate change by slowing soil erosion and moderating temperatures.

**Statement by Dr. Peter Winsor, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:**

“Protecting old-growth forests like the Tongass National Forest from logging and development is a critical step toward ensuring that federal forests contribute all they can to achieving our country’s climate goals. The Tongass is a carbon champion, representing 44% of carbon mitigation capacity across the entire national forest system, and when these forests are cut down, they release up to two-thirds of their stored carbon to the atmosphere, cranking the dial up even more on storm intensity, sea-level rise, wildfires and climate-related health risks.

“In the near term, restoring Roadless protections to the Tongass will create breathing room to maximize its climate contribution over the long haul through rules for permanent conservation of carbon-rich mature and old-growth forests. It will also preserve special places that Alaska Native communities consider sacred and support outdoor recreation and tourism industries that thrive when forests are valued for their many ecological benefits. Mature and old-growth forests represent a critical part of nature-based solutions to the climate crisis.”

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*Alaska Wilderness League stands with, serves and supports the many people and organizations that believe in a sustainable future for Alaska. We honor and respect the cultures of Alaska Natives whose way of life remains deeply connected to the state’s land, waters and wildlife. We believe that Alaska’s long-term economic future and subsistence traditions are inexorably tied to the health and sound stewardship of its natural resources, which support hunting, fishing, tourism, and unrivaled outdoor experiences that are central to Alaskans’ quality of life.*



[www.AlaskaWild.org](http://www.AlaskaWild.org)

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