



DEFINING MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service and U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands contain more than 178 million acres of forest, which provide a variety of ecological, social, Tribal, and economic values. Among these values are those provided by older forests, sometimes referred to as old-growth and mature forests.

Mature and old-growth forests are often perceived to be tall trees with large diameters, such as the giant and now rare Redwoods on the west coast. Mature and old-growth forests, however, come in all shapes and sizes and abundance of trees.

VALUE OF MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Mature and old-growth forests are important to a wide range of natural ecosystems and people and communities across the country. Mature and old-growth forests provide:

- Biological diversity
- Carbon sequestration
- Wildlife and fisheries habitat
- Recreation
- Beauty/aesthetics
- Soil productivity
- Clean water

THE PROCESS

To better define and quantify the benefits and value of mature and old-growth forests, and in response to Executive Order 14072, Section 2(b), the Forest Service and BLM worked together to inventory their collective lands.

To identify the initial inventory and define mature and old-growth forests, an interagency team:

- Studied wide variety of forest types and ecological zones across the country.
- Gathered and reviewed a wide range of data and methods from the scientific community.
- Relied on time-tested definitions developed over the past 30 years.
- Collected robust public and stakeholder input that helped shape decision making.

INITIAL INVENTORY RESULTS

Based on the initial inventory, Forest Service and BLM lands contain roughly 32 million acres of old growth and about 80 million acres of mature forest. Old growth represents 18 percent and mature another 45 percent of all forested land managed by the two agencies.

ON THE HORIZON

Alongside partners and the science community, the Forest Service and BLM will explore additional technologies to map mature and old growth at finer, more resolute scales using aerial and satellite imagery and to create a long-term monitoring system.

A team of interagency experts will look at how to analyze and assess threats and risks to mature and old-growth forests. The agencies are also considering timelines and opportunities for another round of public and stakeholder input and engagement related to this next phase.

