

## Your Summer Report

# To log or let grow: The fate of our oldest forests hangs in the balance

By Ellen Montgomery, director of our national public lands campaigns

Just because a forest is on federal land doesn't mean it is protected from logging. In fact, logging and selling of wood is built into the missions of two federal agencies, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). That means logging is a persistent threat to many forests and trees that should be protected.

Some old forests are being logged right now. The Forest Service and BLM have approved numerous logging projects across hundreds of thousands of acres that target mature and old-growth trees, which store vast amounts of carbon and provide havens for a diverse array of wild plants and animals.

But thanks to hundreds of thousands of people who are speaking up for the trees—including Environment Georgia members like you—we've urged the Biden administration to establish protections for these mature and old-growth trees and forests.

### Progress on safeguards

In December, the U.S. Forest Service proposed the first nationwide plan to improve safeguards for old-growth forests. The proposal came after more than 500,000 comments submitted last summer urged swift and durable action to protect mature and old-growth forests.

The draft proposal sets ambitious goals for managing and expanding old growth in national forests, but contains major gaps. Notably, it carves out the Tongass National Forest—our largest



Last summer, staff delivered more than 500,000 comments urging the U.S. Forest Service to protect old-growth forests.

old growth national forest—from protection. The proposal also leaves open the option to sell old-growth trees to timber mills that have been logged as part of ecological projects. And it does not offer protections for mature trees and forests, which if not logged, will eventually become old-growth. Our national forests, especially in the eastern United States, have little old-growth remaining.

During a public comment period that closed in early February, thousands of supporters like you asked for stronger provisions that eliminate commercial logging of old-growth trees.

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Thanks  
for making it  
all possible

## FedEx should absolutely, positively 'go solar'

When you drop off an overnight package with FedEx, wouldn't you feel better if the energy used to deliver that package to its destination came from clean, renewable solar power?

On Jan. 11, our research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center delivered 11,500 petition signatures to FedEx

waters while right whales are in town, they put at risk the Atlantic's most endangered large whale.

With only around 350 Right whales left on the planet, large ships are required to slow their speeds down to 10 knots in specified areas to ensure Right whales aren't hit. Unfortunately, a recent Oceana analysis found that of the ships they tracked, 84% of them sped in these slow zones.

That's why Environment America Research & Policy Center is urging the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Coast Guard to do more to ensure ships adhere to the speed limit and extend these regulations to all boats, not just large vessels.

"We know how to keep Right whales and their babies safe from boat strikes: We can slow boats down," said Kelsey Lamp, director of our national Protect Our Oceans Campaign. "We need to make sure all boats are going slow for whales. A recent NOAA proposal would work towards this goal, but it's not yet final."

## Georgia launches electric bus and bike programs

In January, two programs were announced to introduce electric buses and bikes to Georgia, making transportation and the air cleaner.

With funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021, The Clean School Bus Program by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) focuses on replacing polluting diesel school buses with clean, electric school buses that are better for the environment and preferred by school districts.

Environment Georgia and our national network have advocated that Congress fund electric school buses. In this round of funding, 97% of buses purchased will be electric. The EPA will be able to allocate 334 clean electric buses, compared to 122 buses in 2022.

The Atlanta City Council voted to allocate \$1 million in funding for an electric bicycle rebate program. This initiative could give participants up to \$2,000 as an incentive when they purchase an electric bike. To read our e-bike explainer and learn how you can enjoy cleaner, greener transportation, visit our website.

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmentgeorgia.org>.

Isaac Russell



Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy, collects petition signatures to urge FedEx to go solar.

world headquarters, urging the shipping leader to put solar panels on its warehouses and parking lots by 2035.

FedEx owns and operates more than 5,000 facilities with at least 122 million square feet of rooftop space. Researchers at Environment America Research & Policy Center determined that if FedEx maximized the solar potential of its roofs, the company's rooftop solar arrays could provide 61% of the electricity it purchased in 2021.

According to the report "Solar on Warehouses," if all of America's warehouse roofs had solar panels, they could produce enough energy to power more than 19 million average homes.

"We absolutely, positively need to generate more of our energy from clean, renewable sources," said Johanna Neumann, senior director of the Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy at Environment America Research & Policy Center. "FedEx can help America deliver on the promise of a cleaner, greener future."

## To save these whales, ships must slow down

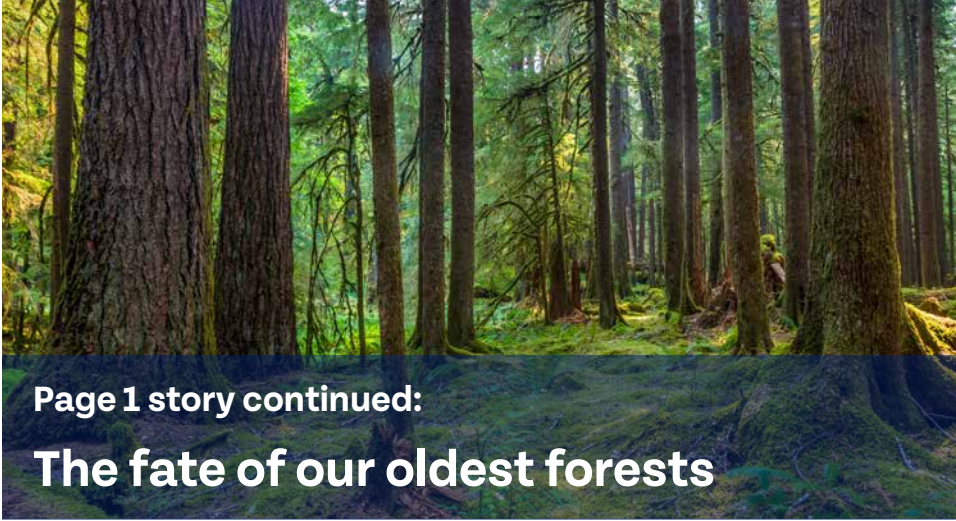
Speeding in a school zone puts kids at risk. When cargo ships speed through our coastal



### Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment Georgia or Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentGeorgia.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentGeorgia.org)



Jim Schwabel via Shutterstock

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## The fate of our oldest forests

Tens of thousands of people and more than 170 organizations called on the U.S. Forest Service to strengthen its proposal to conserve old growth trees and forests on federal land.

### Standing together for the trees

We've urged Congress to oppose the Manchin-Barrasso bill, which calls for deliberately chopping down our mature forests as a way to "improve forest health"—an obviously terrible and short-sighted idea.

Once our mature forests are gone, they'll take decades to grow back. That's more than 80 years of an intricate ecosystem destroyed in the blink of an eye. That's decades we don't have to keep huge amounts of climate-warming carbon from being released into the atmosphere.

We need our forests to stay standing for generations to come, but the Manchin-Barrasso bill threatens to level towering giants and destroy many of our nation's mature

trees. Thankfully, supporters and members of Environment Georgia and our national network took more than 32,000 actions opposing this bill.

### All of our old-growth and mature forests deserve protection

Seventy-six percent of the forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management don't have strong protections from logging.

We can't afford to cut down our oldest forests. They shelter wildlife and they shelter us from the worst impacts of climate change by absorbing carbon from our atmosphere.

Thanks to your support, we're working to save our forests by raising the voices of forest defenders everywhere and urging the Biden administration to enact the strongest protections possible to keep them off the chopping block.

*With your support, we'll keep advocating for the strongest protections possible for our old-growth and mature forests.*



Staff

## Featured staff



Kimball Nelson

Jennette Gayer  
State Director

As director, Jennette coordinates policy development, research, outreach and legislative advocacy for Environment Georgia. She has run successful campaigns to designate Georgia's first outstanding national resource water along the headwaters of the Conasauga River, expand parks along the Chattahoochee River and Jekyll Island State Park, and stop construction of three new coal-fired power plants in Georgia, while also advocating for solar policies that have helped make Georgia one of the top 10 states for solar in the country. She serves on the leadership team for the Georgia Water Coalition, and on the board of The Georgia Solar Energy Association. Jennette lives in Atlanta, where she enjoys training for triathlons and hiking and camping in Georgia's mountains.



Environment Georgia and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.



P.O. Box 5207  
Atlanta, GA 31107  
(404) 370-1764

# Environment Georgia

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## Your 2024 Summer Report

### Our mission:

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Georgia Citizen Lobby, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Georgia's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

## We can't let a toxic mine ruin the Okefenokee

The Okefenokee is the largest wildlife refuge east of the Mississippi River. It's home to some of our country's rarest animals, including the gopher tortoise, the wood stork and the eastern indigo snake. We're fighting to protect this wildlife habitat from a toxic mine.

A proposed titanium dioxide mine in Okefenokee's backyard would spell disaster for wildlife. The Twin Pines mine would

destroy more than 300 acres of wetlands and could siphon off water from the swamp, making the Okefenokee more likely to experience droughts and wildfire.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division can deny the draft mining permits. This spring Environment Georgia educated the public and encouraged supporters to contact state officials before the agency's April 9 comment period deadline.

Many animals that live in the Okefenokee wildlife refuge used to be threatened or endangered, but have since recovered—in part because their habitat was safeguarded. With your support and action, preserving this area means that formerly threatened species, including the American alligator and the red-cockaded woodpecker, will have a place to call home for generations to come.

*Environment Georgia staff and canvassers gather in front of the state capitol calling for the protection of the Okefenokee.*



Staff