

## 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 Illinois 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

deadliest forms of air pollution. Now, those statistics should be changing for the better.

After more than 500,000 comments from Americans and members like you called for stronger standards against soot pollution, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a rule aimed at curbing soot pollution, a major contributor to respiratory illnesses, heart issues and cancer. The new guidelines are estimated to prevent 4,500 premature deaths and 800,000 instances of asthma symptoms annually.

“Air pollution used to be the price we had to pay to heat our homes, commute or produce goods by burning coal, oil and gas,” said Lisa Frank, executive director of Environment America Research & Policy Center's Washington Office.

“Thankfully, in the rapidly accelerating renewable energy era, that's no longer the case. These soot standards will save lives, clear our skies and alleviate the burden of asthma and other illnesses. That's something all Americans should celebrate.”

## Illinois' wetlands need our help

Why is Lake Michigan, which supplies drinking water for millions of people and supports a complex web of fish and wildlife, at risk? Because the majority of streams and wetlands that feed into our larger rivers and lakes aren't protected.

More than half of our nation's streams and remaining wetlands no longer have federal protection from pollution or degradation as a result of a 2023 Supreme Court decision. These wetlands and streams help protect clean water by filtering pollutants. They also provide critical habitat for wildlife. Since 1818, Illinois has lost nearly 90% of its wetland acres to development and other uses. It's crucial that we call upon the state to ensure that no more is lost.

“Illinois has an opportunity to take action and fill the gap left by the federal government,” said Emily Kowalski, Environment Illinois outreach and engagement manager. “We should strengthen our protections for wetlands and streams for the clean, healthy water that both humans and wildlife in the Prairie State rely on.”

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.”

## EPA rule means less soot in the air we breathe

Thousands of people die each year from illnesses related to soot exposure, one of the

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

Isaac Russell



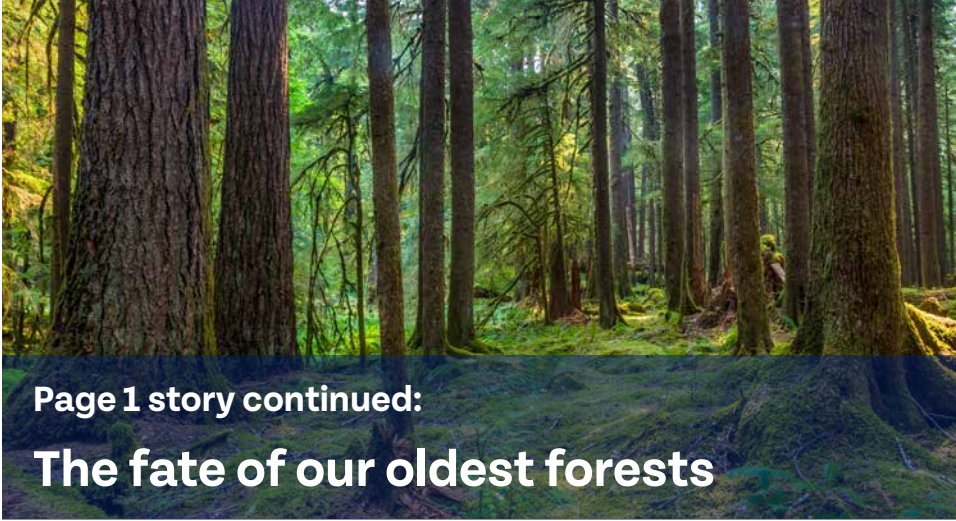
Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy, collects petition signatures to urge FedEx to go solar.



## Toward a greener future

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

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



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Emily manages the marketing and public engagement strategy for Environment Illinois's campaigns, including our campaign to protect the Great Lakes from plastic pollution. Emily lives in Chicago where she enjoys knitting and biking.



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

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# Environment Illinois

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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 Illinois, NFP, a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Illinois' 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.

## Moving forward on banning plastic foam in Illinois

You may often find yourself leaving a restaurant with a single-use plastic foam container that you'll throw away minutes later. This excessive plastic waste is why Environment Illinois is advocating for a ban of polystyrene foam containers.

Polystyrene foam is among the worst of plastics because it is expensive, difficult to recycle and not biodegradable. It can take hundreds of years to break down as it sits

in waterways, parks and landfills, harming the health of wildlife and humans.

Eight states have already enacted bans on polystyrene foam containers. Illinois could be next: A proposed ban would prohibit retail establishments and restaurants from selling or distributing polystyrene foodware starting January 2025. The bill is currently in the Illinois Senate.

This summer, Environment Illinois needs your help to get this bill to pass the Senate. We will be out in the community, knocking on doors and lifting up the voices of supporters like you to make Illinois more plastic-free.



Staff

*Members of the Coalition for Plastic Reduction in Springfield, Ill., lobby state decision-makers last February to support a ban on polystyrene foam containers.*