

## More Protection Needed for Old-growth Forests

Two former chiefs of the USDA Forest Service are urging the White House to protect what remains of the nation's ancient forests by developing a national old-growth forest conservation plan. Jack Ward Thomas and Mike Dombeck, both of whom worked for President Clinton, have endorsed a letter laying out a proposal recently sent to President Obama. Calling for protection of old-growth forests from logging and expanded efforts to rebuild "depleted" ancient forests across the country, the letter is also endorsed by other top forestry and wildlife conservation scientists.

Supporters of the proposal say the nation's old-growth forests limit man-made climate change by absorbing huge amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases linked to global warming. Efforts to protect

and expand these forests could "play a role in reducing the effects of global climate change," the letter said, adding that "old-growth forests from the Pacific Northwest to southeast Alaska have the highest density carbon stores on earth," in part because the largest and oldest trees store the greatest amounts of carbon.

### An ABC Priority

ABC is a strong supporter of the call to develop a national old-growth conservation plan. ABC's Steve Holmer said preserving ancient forests is one of group's top priorities, both because it could help limit problems linked to climate change and because it would keep habitat intact for threatened birds such as Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet.


"As of now there's nothing about the importance of conserving old-growth in the forest chapter of the administration's National Climate Change Assessment," said Holmer. "At a minimum it needs to be revised to offer climate change guidance to the agencies that manage federal forests."

Peer-reviewed studies in scientific journals leave no doubt that "high-biomass" old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest could significantly limit climate change. "That's because these are the world's most productive forests when it comes to storing carbon," Holmer said.

### New Research Supports the Plan

The author of one old-growth sequestration study, Olga Krankina of Oregon State University, recently concluded that no less than half of the country's remaining ancient forests are in the Pacific Northwest, and that nearly 70 percent of the northwest forests managed by the Bureau of Land Management are made up of old-growth trees.

*The U.S. Senate is now considering legislation that would accelerate old-growth logging in northwest forests.*

 To weigh in on this legislation, visit: [support.abcbirds.org/NWForests](http://support.abcbirds.org/NWForests)



Old-growth forest in the Pacific Northwest by Steve Holmer, ABC