

# Old Growth Forests:

## How much is enough?

### EFFORTS TO EXPAND OLD GROWTH

There are ongoing efforts in the US, EU, and other regions to **identify primary, old growth, and mature forests with consideration of their sustainability and protection.** Management actions can **favor** the development of these structures and components through **retention of older trees** (i.e., legacy trees), **reducing the impact of roads and other human impacts,** and **retaining logs and other forms of deadwood in the forest.**

### DIVERSE OUTLOOKS

The question of “What is old growth?” holds many definitions **depending** upon the **scientific, cultural, and policy lenses** that are applied.

### WHAT IS OLD GROWTH?

In the US, old growth is defined as “dynamic systems distinguished by **old trees and related structural attributes...** encompass the **later stages of stand development** that typically differ from earlier stages in a variety of characteristics, which may include **tree size, accumulations of large dead woody material, number of canopy layers, species composition, and ecosystem function...**[and] are distinguished by their **ecosystem services and social, cultural, and economic values.** “

### WHAT IS OLD GROWTH?

The EU defines old growth forest as a “forest stand or area consisting of native tree species that have **developed,** predominantly through **natural processes, structures and dynamics** normally associated with **late-seral development phases** in **primary or undisturbed forests** of the same type. Signs of formal human activities may be visible, but they are **gradually disappearing** or are too **limited** to significantly disturb natural processes”.

### WHY IS OLD GROWTH UNNECESSARY?

Innovations in forest management not only **yield technically consistent engineered products, minimize wood waste, and enhance the economic competitiveness of the industry.** They also prompt adaptation in the forest products sector to **focus on smaller diameter trees,** thus rendering the processing of larger diameter logs from old growth trees unfeasible.

### WHY IS OLD GROWTH NECESSARY?

Old growth forests **play a crucial role in safeguarding** unique biodiversity, supporting plant and animal habitats, preserving genetic diversity, serving as valuable carbon sinks, contributing to climate change mitigation, and holding social and cultural significance.

### PROTECTION OF OLD GROWTH

The protection and conservation of forests necessitate the **collaboration and engagement** of diverse individuals, communities, and interests. Through effective management, the establishment of secondary old growth forests becomes feasible thus, over time, offering the **attributes and benefits associated with traditional old growth forests.**