



OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

"Connecting people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, native forests"

How to select a forest to include in the Old-Growth Forest Network

Thank you for agreeing to help us find the right forest in your county for the Old-Growth Forest Network. If you're wondering where to start this document will help. For a forest to be added to the Old-Growth Forest Network it should be:

1. As mature as possible – old-growth is best
2. Protected from logging
3. Open to the public
4. Relatively accessible

It is usually best to begin by making some calls and asking around to find the one or two persons who seem to know the most about forests in your county. Sometimes this will be a person in the parks, sometimes this will be a person in academia, and sometimes this will just be an interested tree lover. Ask this person if there are any old-growth forests in your county. If so, are they open to the public? Your work may be very easy if the answer to both questions is "yes." Maybe you will be in the rare position to have more than one to choose from. If so, go to visit all the candidate forests. Pay attention to access, parking, etc. Which one has the best "first mile" that will keep youngsters interested? Which one feels most "wild"?

You may also try Googling: old-growth forest & your county's name. Sometimes you will be surprised.

What if my county doesn't have any old-growth forest left?

Sadly, this will be the most typical situation. In that case you should search the available publicly accessible forests to find the one that is MOST mature and MOST natural and MOST protected. This forest will be included in the Old-Growth Forest Network in hopes that someday it will recover more of its old growth characteristics. Think of them as "future old-growth forests." This is a very important part of our work, so don't be disappointed if this is the case.

As with the other forests evaluate them for quality based on access, parking, trails, and the beauty, and diversity in the beginning of the trail (this may be all some people will see).

What do we mean by "Protected from Logging"?

For a forest to be included in the Old-Growth Forest Network it must be protected from commercial harvesting of timber. The reason for this is that old-growth forests can take hundreds of years to develop their full range of structure and ecological importance. It is not enough that those board members and

owners TODAY agree not to log, we need some insurance that those who come after us (who may, perhaps, be motivated by greed) do not have the possibility of destroying the former decades, and perhaps centuries, of protection. What good is an old-growth forest network that includes forests that can be destroyed in days? We want our network to include only forests that will be there for all generations. We want someone to be able to visit a special place as a young child and then return with their grandchildren to share the same magical place. We do not want them to return to find the forest clear-cut or even mechanically thinned.

Some forests already have this level of protection on them, by law, when they are added to the Network. For example: National Parks, National Wilderness Areas, Nature Conservancy lands with 'Forever Wild' easements, and State Wildlands and Wilderness areas --these are already protected and no one needs to sign an agreement. But some other organizations with forestlands they want to include in the Network do not have that level of protection. There we have a number of choices:

1. Protect the forest with a 'Forever Wild' easement. (Fairly strong legal protection, but takes a while to complete). We are willing to help with this.
2. An organizational mission statement that includes protection of the land and a management plan for the forest that precludes commercial logging (legally weak but acceptable to us because it shows intention).
3. The landowner (or representative) signs an MOU stating that the forest will never be logged. (Again, legally weak but acceptable.) We can send you a copy of this form if you request it.

We are also open to other arrangements that show the intention to preserve the forest in a natural condition for all time.

What are your standards for “Open to the Public”?

Ideally, the chosen forest would be open to the public for free twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. In that case any family could visit a forest any time that was convenient for them. In reality, however, we have included forests in the Network that are open for only certain hours of the day, or certain days of the week, or certain months of the year. We have also included forests that charge a minimal fee for entrance. These restrictions should be considered when choosing the ideal forest for the Network.

What are your standards for “Relatively Accessible”?

The ideal Network forest has a parking area and a trail that is not too difficult, that leads one immediately into a high quality forest. Trail signage is welcomed. Of course the ideal is not always achieved.

Considering all of these factors you will find that one forest rises to the top as “not perfect in every aspect” but “the best overall.” That is the forest you will want to nominate. Send your final suggestion to us. Together we will contact the forest manager and start the process for including a forest in the Old-Growth Forest Network. Thank you for your help!