



OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

Overview of criteria for recognition by the Old-Growth Forest Network

Please read the “Description of OGFN and Forest Dedication Overview” PDF file first, as it provides a helpful overview of what the Old-Growth Forest Network is, the general criteria used to select forests for inclusion in the Network, and how dedication into the Network is completed. The purpose of this document is to complement the aforementioned information with additional details.

Of the 3,140 counties in the U.S. most, but not all, can support forest growth. The Old-Growth Forest Network is targeting the ~2,370 counties where forests naturally grow. We work to identify and recognize exceptional representative forests (old-growth or maturing secondary growth) in each county. An ideal forest for the Network has the following characteristics:

1. Open to the Public
2. Protected from commercial logging
3. As mature as possible (old growth is best, and if you’re interested in learning the ecological characteristics of old-growth forests let us know and we’ll be happy to share a list with you)
4. Reasonably accessible (parking and trail)
5. All things being equal, a feeling of ‘wild.’

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 structural complexity, biodiversity, and ecological importance. It is not enough that those board members and owners TODAY agree not to harvest, 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, The 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 and can share helpful resources with you to ease the process.

2. An organizational mission statement that includes protection of the land, and a management plan for the forest that precludes commercial harvest (legally weak but acceptable to us because it shows intention).
3. The land owner (or representative) signs an MOA stating that the forest will never be logged. (Again, legally weak but acceptable.)

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

Exceptions to the 'no harvest' requirement are allowed (but not required) for situations of visitor safety, trail maintenance, non-native tree species, or non-native insect infestations. For younger forests, hand thinning will be acceptable when carried out to speed the development of the native old-growth forest characteristics.

We hope you are excited to have your special forest included in this national Network. Please contact the OGFN staff member that you are connected to with any questions:

Joan Maloof, Ph.D
Executive Director
joan@oldgrowthforest.net
410-251-1800
P.O. Box 21
Easton MD 21601

Susan Barnett
Administrative Assistant
susan@oldgrowthforest.net
P.O. Box 21
Easton MD 21601