



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, December 15, 2024

Boreal Forest: Lungs of the Earth

What is the boreal forest? Here is some basic information. “With 1.5 billion acres stretching from Alaska to Newfoundland, the boreal forest represents nearly **30% of the world's forest cover**.... The boreal forest functions as **North America's bird nursery**. Every fall, 3-5 billion birds leave the forest after breeding season and head to warmer climates for the winter. The twitters and calls you might hear from the forest canopy could be any of the 325 bird species who rely on this region to raise their hatchlings.

Through the magic of photosynthesis, this enormous forest **'breathes' in and stores vast quantities of carbon dioxide**. Deep in its lush soil, the forest stores so much carbon that if you burned all of the world's reserves of oil, you still wouldn't release the amount of carbon the boreal forest is currently holding. That makes this vast landscape not only beautiful, unique, and ecologically rich -- but also one of our greatest tools to fight climate change.

But [you knew there would be a 'but'] **The forest is being chopped down at a rate of one and a half football fields every minute** -- often to produce paper products such as tissues and toilet paper.

These incredible facts about North America's boreal forest make one thing clear: a place so unique, beautiful, and environmentally essential deserves our protection.” (*Environment America*, 11/30/24)

Lumber production is another area that threatens the forest. For example, “Canada's forests -- including the boreal forest -- are a key part of Home Depot's wood supply.... **Every minute, this forest loses about 2 acres of trees to logging**.... That lumber might become a deck or a cabinet or a fence post -- but it won't be a tree growing in a forest ever again.” [Take Action: Sign the petition to Home Depot to do more to protect the boreal forest.](#) (*Environment America*, 12/2/24)

A bill that would open some of our oldest forests to destructive logging just passed the House. The **“Fix Our Forests Act”** now goes to the Senate. The name of the bill sounds positive; however, it won't fix anything. “Instead, it **will exempt millions of acres of federal land from environmental review**, opening the door to clear-cutting, logging of old-growth trees, and the construction of logging roads.

It does all this in the name of preventing forest fires -- an important goal. **But chopping down irreplaceable old trees is not the right way to protect our forests from burning**. In fact, removing fire-resistant old-growth trees can actually make a forest more vulnerable to fire. Handing our forests over to the logging industry is not the right solution to wildfires.” [Take action to protect our forests from logging by sending a message now.](#) (*Environmental Action*, 10/14/24)

“Mature and old-growth trees and forests protect our climate by absorbing and storing carbon, boost resilience to fire, help regulate temperatures, filter drinking water, and shelter wildlife.

As people of faith, we believe we have a moral responsibility to care for our Sacred Earth and ensure these forests remain to mitigate climate change and maintain their natural benefits for current and future generations.” (From a letter to the U.S. Forest Service by *Interfaith Power and Light*)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org. [Click here for column archive.](#)