

**From:** [Gwen Long](#)  
**To:** [Mayor](#); [Transportation Commission](#); [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Why Old-Growth Forests? — Old-Growth Forest Netwo...  
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<https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/why-oldgrowth-forests>

This is why we need to preserve and savor Sauk Creek urban, old-growth riparian forest, instead of zipping through it on a bike.

We all need to be stewards of the woodlands, wildlife and wetlands, and protect them to the best of our ability.

An East West path and ADA bridge through the creek ravine would remove so many additional trees to achieve the 5% trail grade.

#### CULTURAL ROLE OF OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Many children growing up today have no idea of what the natural appearance of the land surrounding them would be if it were undisturbed. What species of trees would grow? What animals would live there? We speak of “nature-deficit disorder” but how is it to be remedied if there are no places to show these children, but only stories in a book about what their town “used to” look like and the animals that “used to” live there?

There are health benefits and psychological benefits to be gained from forests too (although these have not been specifically tied, yet, to the age of the forests). Perhaps the most recognized, but least studied, attribute of older forests is their beauty. This element of beauty brings a mixture of joy and respect to almost everyone who experiences an old-growth forest. Many forest lovers drive or fly hundreds of miles each year to reach an old-growth forest.

The National Parks began as places for human recreation and spiritual refreshment, and the ecological benefits were recognized later. In our establishment of an old-growth forest network, we acknowledge the cultural and ecological benefits as being equal from the beginning.

#### ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

All forest stages have an important ecological role to play. The old-growth stage is especially important because of its unique structure. Various canopy layers and berry-producing plants are beneficial for many bird species. In a forest that has not been disturbed for hundreds of years some trees will develop hollow cavities. These cavities become important nesting places for animals. In an undisturbed forest some large trees will die and fall, creating yet more habitat: numerous insects, fungi, reptiles and amphibians benefit from the fallen trees. The moisture retained within an old-growth forests benefits lichen and mosses, and the species that live among the mosses and lichens. Old-growth forests are one of the few land uses where topsoil is created instead of destroyed. More carbon and nitrogen is retained in an old-growth forest

than in forests of other age classes. For improving water quality and air quality there is nothing better than an old-growth forest.

[https://madison.com/opinion/letters/letter-wetlands-nature-environment-community-ecosystem/article\\_34ac35fe-0cac-11ef-a0b3-b3613f899e1c.html](https://madison.com/opinion/letters/letter-wetlands-nature-environment-community-ecosystem/article_34ac35fe-0cac-11ef-a0b3-b3613f899e1c.html)

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