

Conservation of older trees, trees with old growth characteristics

Following are values of old growth characteristic trees and reasons to retain them

1. integral part of historic old growth stand structure (old trees, and stands in which trees can grow old, are the model of what we want to create)
2. naturally occurring, genes are adapted to specific sites (and their survival over 150 years or more indicates they can tolerate varying climatic conditions, as well as insects and disease)
3. lived in concert with other larger old growth trees for 150+ years, have “sorted it out” with other old growth trees.
4. small old growth are greatly reduced from historic levels, rare on landscape
5. generally fire resistant with thick bark and high limbs. Old growth ponderosa pine, larch, Doug fir, and incense cedar have fire resistant characteristics. Even white fir old growth has some fire resistant bark characteristics.
6. provide old growth habitat for birds and wildlife, just like larger old growth trees. large limb structure for nests, broken limbs, broken or multiple tops, heart rot, cavities, mid level perches for birds. Do not have the over 21” bole size habitat value.
7. can become snags that are currently deficient on landscape (and higher proportion of heartwood means those snags are different than a similar-sized snag from a younger tree; therefore the snag “community” will be more diverse)
8. naturally occurring in clumps of larger old growth trees
9. Old trees of a given diameter put less of a demand on soil water than a younger tree of the same diameter. (I. e., old trees shouldn’t count against basal area [or at least not count as much].)

Other possible considerations for retention;

1. not usually very common, so not a huge number across landscape. Need to do simple studies to see actually how many are on the landscape.
2. often not the best saw log or best economic value; may be short, crooked, broken or multiple tops, broken out limbs, heart rot.
3. the public values protection of old growth

By Tim Lillebo

Reviewed and added to by Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin