We give lots of lip service describing climate change as an emergency or existential threat. According to the Climate Emergency Declaration Organization, 2336 jurisdictions around the world have declared it to be an emergency, but we are not really acting like it. There are many possible emergency actions. I'm looking at 6 that could make a significant difference, are doable, but require real sacrifice and hard choices:

1. Ending financing of fossil fuel projects
2. Accelerating renewable siting on- and offshore
3. Fast tracking transmission
4. Requiring large-scale carbon capture
5. International agreement and focus on methane
6. Ending deforestation

Today, it's ending deforestation. (Here's Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, and Part 4).

The World Resources Institute runs the Global Forest Review and Global Forest Watch, both phenomenal resources for information about the current state of the world's forests. It's not going particularly well:

> Nearly half of the forests that covered 50 percent the world's land 10,000 years ago have since been cleared. Most forests still standing today have been degraded or fragmented; by one measure, less than one-third of them are still intact. We have seen governments and companies make time-bound commitments to end deforestation, restore degraded forest landscapes, and achieve sustainable forest management. But rapid deforestation and forest degradation have continued, driven primarily by growing global demand for food, fuel, and fiber. Climate change impacts, including severe fires and new vectors and outbreaks of forest pests and diseases, exacerbate the decline.
> https://research.wri.org/gfr/global-forest-review

As we know, forests provide many benefits. Here are some, from WWF:

"Over 1.6 billion people depend on forests for food or fuel, and some 70 million people worldwide – including many Indigenous communities – call forests home. Forests provide us with oxygen, shelter, jobs, water, nourishment and fuel. . .

Forests also play an important role in the global water cycle, moving water across the earth by releasing water vapor and capturing rainfall. They also filter out pollution and chemicals, improving the quality of water available for human use. . .

[F]orests are home to over 80% of terrestrial biodiversity, including 80% of amphibians, 75% of birds and 68% of mammals. Deforestation of some tropical forests could lead to the loss of as many as 100 species a day. . .

Forests are the largest storehouses of carbon after the oceans, as they absorb this greenhouse gas from the air and lock it away above and below ground. . . .”

(And here’s more from Scientific American).

But profit continues to trump environment, whether it be for development or commodities. From National Geographic:

> A major motive for deforestation is cattle ranching. China, the United States, and other countries have created a consumer demand for beef, so clearing land for cattle ranching can be profitable—even if it’s illegal. The demand for pastureland, as well as cropland for food such as soybeans, makes it difficult to protect forest resources.

Solving the deforestation problem requires multi-faceted action, including enhanced detection of deforestation, improved and increased legal enforcement, and economic incentives for maintaining forest integrity. One set of actions, however, would make a substantial difference, and there is precedence.

In the 1980s, despite the existence of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and other laws, tuna fishing killed hundreds of thousands of dolphins. In 1990, Earth Island Institute and the International Marine Mammal Project helped develop the Dolphin-Safe Tuna label, certifying that tuna fishing meets dolphin protection standards. The label has been a major success. If the US and China and other importers of beef, soybeans, palm oil and other commodities currently promoting deforestation purchased only products certified as Forest-Safe, with clear requirements to meet that certification along with enforcement and surveillance, it would dramatically change the economics of deforestation.

Deforestation represents a true emergency, and one for which our response lacks

sufficient urgency. We can change that but only with commitment by importing countries. That requires political will, which is in short supply. 28 years of global Conferences of the Parties have fallen well short. It’s time for an emergency convening with a set of emergency actions, with response to deforestation at the top of the list.

While the climate change emergency response need not be frantic, we better get to it.