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Concerning the Harper Creek-Lost Cove Creek area Status

To Ms Kristen Bail,

I have, within a few minutes of beginning this email correspondence, learned of the possible loss of the Harper Creek and Lost Cove Creek WSA designation. I hope this email reaches you in time to be given some small consideration. I began my association with the area when my father took me on a trip to the Lost Cove creek as a teen. He trout fished the creek forty-five years ago, and when I began to have an interest, that was one of our favorite places. My wife and I took my own sons on their first backpacking trip when the youngest was four to Harper Creek. We spent four days in the beauty of the area with only what we carried. My oldest son, six at the time, began his trout fishing experience in the waters there, on that trip. He is now a young adult and avid trout fisher. He says that the area is a place he always goes back to as a favorite. I also took my two brothers-in-law on their first backpacking trip when they were young men. We backpacked eleven miles mostly along Lost Cove creek. I have seen the beauty of the Yellow Fringed orchid blooming in the mountain coves there. I saw the boneset plant (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) for the first time along Harper Creek. I have admired the view down the valley from the Big Lost Cove cliffs and heard the cry of the peregrine falcons that nest there. I have hunted grouse on the ridges with my brother. I have a new granddaughter, and look forward to the day I can share the beauty of the area with her. I am sure that my family is not the only one to experience and love such a scenic wilderness. I think it would be a terrible shame to let such a wonderful area fall into development. It seems there are increasingly fewer and fewer such places where someone can experience the outdoors in such a way. Those creeks and the surrounding mountains have meant a lot to my family for nearly fifty years. It is my hope that future generations can get the same enjoyment and learn the same love of our wild places that my father, my sons, and I have. Those who would see the area change, want it so because other places have already been exploited and spoiled. If we lose this as a wilderness area now, how long before we have another place, or will it be gone forever. I suppose this isn't the last wild place, but surely, as we consider the stewardship of the resources in this state and country, there is room to let this one remain wild and beautiful. I live on a small farm in Iredell Co, NC. The land of this farm has belonged to my ancestors since it was a Granville grant. I can understand the benefit agricultural and industrial development, but I also have seen how a small parcel of land changes. I know that there are species of plants and animals that once were plentiful here, but are now only rarely noticed. Some can't be found at all. I must consider my own stewardship of this farm. Once things begin to change, it seems that change accelerates. I fear that if the Harper Creek and Lost Cove Creek Wilderness Study Areas lose their designation, they will soon be devoid of the qualities that have drawn my family and so many others to enjoy them. Perhaps the worth of the area, as it is, can't be expressed in dollars. But surely leaving it wild preserves a uniqueness and richness that we should still value. Thank you for attention.