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Please protect more wilderness in the Nantahala and Pisgah national forests

Oct 20, 2016

Plan Revision Team Leader for the Nantahala-Pisgah national forests

Dear for the Nantahala-Pisgah national forests,

Please review more wildlands and recommend greatly expanded wilderness protection within the Nantahala-Pisgah national forests.

With over 350,000 acres of special wildlands in these two forests, we have an important opportunity to protect invaluable places. These lands must be conserved in their wild condition so they can provide clean water, wildlife habitat and numerous opportunities for non-motorized recreation.

I cannot support any of the draft alternatives until they represent the interests of a greater range of stakeholders. I urge you to develop an alternative for recreation, and another alternative that greatly expands recommended wilderness.

Reconsider which areas to carry forward for analysis, keeping in mind that the 1975 Eastern Wilderness Areas Act mandated that the U. S. Forest Service take a realistic view of development and human impacts when considering potential wilderness areas. The current overzealous rejection of areas is a reversion to the "purity theory" of wilderness that was rejected by the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act.

Managing more areas as recommended wilderness will better meet growing demand for recreation and related economic activities that diversify and strengthen local economies in the southern Appalachians.

In addition, areas managed as recommended wilderness represent our least-impacted and most resilient land. Adding under-represented ecosystem types to the wilderness system will preserve essential habitat for sensitive species in this region and help to assure that habitat corridors exist so plants and animals can adapt and migrate in response to a changing climate.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ms. Geneine Payne
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