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Spring 2017 Material Plan Building Blocks

To Whom It May Concern:

In a world where climate change is expressing itself undeniably in temperature rises, increased forest fires, hellacious hurricanes and tropical storms, scarring droughts, and intensified winter storms, it is a time that we spend more detailed effort protecting the natural habitats that we have. Additionally as large sections of the carbon sinks of the Canadian taiga, and the Malaysian and South American Rainforests are being destroyed for profits, it is imperative that we do not let short sided financial gains further this dangerous loss of the climate change buffering effects of large forests. I realize there are areas that can be select cut in a somewhat sustainable way over the long term, but the short term is important as well. While this is a complex task to evaluate, I have researched and studied the forest plan and am providing you with my input for your new plan. As a 7th generation resident of Cherokee Co, NC I find the mountains not only a respite to my busy worklife, but as a crucial link to my heritage. I think many sections of the forest need to be protected and carefully managed to remain in as close to its natural state as possible. I realize that local forests looked very different then they did to my ancestors due to the reckless logging of the majority of Appalachia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I understand you don't "clear cut" per se, but even a heavy selective cut takes a generation to heal from.

In reviewing the proposed FS plan, I do not like the lack of special designation of many obviously special and unique areas and recreation area/trails. I don't think leaving areas up to "zoning rules" is enough protection. The Bartram Trail, Benton McKay, Art Loeb, and Mountains to Sea trails need to be made into special corridors as they are as important to us as the more famed Appalachian Trail. Also, special designations such as special interest or backcountry need to be made to many unique sometimes smaller areas that fall out of one of the large areas I will mention below. If an tract of land has Old Growth forests, it should be designated for more protections from logging. Similarly forested areas along all major waterways need to be designated as natural areas so they can continue to do their job to protect and filter our waterways and protect sensitive aquatic species. I believe you need to add more detailed plans as to how these areas should be protected so that District Rangers are ensured to protect them more so than the zoning areas allow as they are planning projects.

As for specific areas, I think that Linville Mountain should be placed in backcountry management. I enjoy the primitive nature of this area and think it's main purpose should be for non-motorized recreation, and minimal "habitat improvement. Along with several other large environmental groups, I agree that The Upper Creek Gorge/Sugar Knob Backcountry area should be expanded along with the beautiful and pristine Upper Wilson Creek Backcountry area. We need to protect the unique nature of these places preventing roads and more intensive use.

In Tusquittee I would like to see Gipp Creek added to backcountry management. I think the Unicoi Mtn backcountry area needs to be made larger as well. We need more backcountry land in this area that will remain relatively untouched by timbering and increased roads.

In Pisgah Ranger District I think we need to place several areas into "backcountry management". They are unique areas with sensitive species that thrive in their more undeveloped settings. I think this needs to include Upper Courthouse Creek, Danial Ridge, Upper Lickstone Ridge and Cedar Rock Mountain.

The Nantahala Ranger District needs all of Flat Creek and Panthertown Valley, Siler Bald, Fish Hawk

Mountain, and Tellico Bald need to be in backcountry management. I think Corbin Knob, Hench Knob, and Chunky Gal Mtn should be designated as special interest areas. I would like to see the area around Terrapin Mtn to be expanded to at least 4,000 acres.

For the Appalachian Ranger District I think you need to expand the special interest area in Big Ivy to cover all of Big Ivy, not just part of it. I think Snowball Mountain, Shope Creek, and Coxcombe Mtn should be included in this Craggy/Sugar Knob special interest area.

In the Cheoah Ranger District the sacred Upper Santeetlah Creek needs to be designated as a special interest area.

Thank you for taking public input and holding meetings for us to discuss with our forest service staff. I attended the public forum in Brasstown and learned a lot.

Sincerely,

Emily Willey

Murphy, Cherokee County, NC

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