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Comments:

Spring 2017 Material Plan Building Blocks

Grandfather Ranger District: Linville Mountain should be placed in backcountry management. The Upper Creek Gorge/Sugar Knob Backcountry area should be expanded. The Upper Wilson Creek Backcountry area should be expanded.

Appalachian Ranger District: Snowball Mountain, Coxcombe Mountain, and Shope Creek should be included in the Craggy Mountains/Big Ivy Special Interest Area. (We are pleased by the creation of a new Special Interest Area in Big Ivy, though it should cover all of Big Ivy, and not just a portion.)

Pisgah Ranger District: Upper Courthouse Creek, Daniel Ridge, Cedar Rock Mountain, and upper Lickstone Ridge should be placed in backcountry management to protect their remote character and the species that depend on them.

Nantahala Ranger District: All of Panthertown Valley and Flat Creek should be in backcountry management. Tellico Bald, Siler Bald, and Fish Hawk Mountain should be placed in backcountry management. The backcountry area around Terrapin Mountain should be expanded to 4,000 acres. Corbin Knob, Hench Knob, and Chunky Gal Mountain should be Special Interest Areas.

Cheoah Ranger District: Upper Santeetlah Creek should be a Special Interest Area or backcountry area.

Tusquitee District: Gipp Creek should be placed in backcountry management. The Unicoi Mountain backcountry area should be expanded.

Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in general: There are many special places that are in the wrong management area and lack the amount of protection they require. In addition to specific areas mentioned under each Ranger District above, there are dozens of smaller natural areas not protected by the forest plan that should be "zoned" in the backcountry designation. Other resources, such as Old Growth, Riparian areas, state-designated Natural Areas, and major recreational trail corridors, do not have specific management area designations with standards and prescriptions for protection (a departure from the current plan). Rather they are left in zoning that is wide open to logging. For example, the Bartram Trail, Benton McKay Trail, Art Loeb Trail, and Mountains-To-Sea Trail lack a management area that would preserve the special character of these long-distance hiking trails. They should be designated as special corridors, similar to the Appalachian Trail and the Trail of Tears. In short, more specific management areas with standards and guidelines need to exist at the Forest Plan level to hold the District Rangers accountable when proposing future projects within their Districts.

I urge you to consider the above comments as you make your decisions that affect the stewardship of God's good creation and the well being of all people.

Thank you,
Rev. Martha Brimm