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Geographic and Management Area Building Blocks

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this phase of the Pisgah-Nantahala Forest Plan development. As I've mentioned in earlier stages of the process, I have deep roots in these mountains and am deeply invested in making the best possible use of all they have to offer now and far into the future.

I know that much of our forest is already less than pristine and recognize the value of managing for early successional habitat in the appropriate places, for the sake of wildlife and of hunters and also for the health of the woods themselves. However, I'm extremely concerned over the huge percentage of total forest area that is potentially vulnerable to timber production and/or harvest and the inevitable degradation that accompanies it. It may have been possible in times past to make a case that the highest, best use of the trees was for lumber. Now, however, when recreation of all types is dominating our land, culture, and economy, we must look afresh at what our forests contribute to our wellbeing. Adequately sized wilderness, backcountry, and trail corridors, as well as designated recreation areas, are all more essential than ever.

It's good that the Appalachian Trail, Overmountain Victory Trail, and Trail of Tears are specifically acknowledged. However, they and the Art Loeb, Mountains to Sea, Bartram, and Benton MacKaye Trail corridors should all be set aside and kept free of the threat of logging. All are vital as outdoor experiences in themselves and as access paths to more remote backcountry and wilderness areas.

Likewise, as our forests become ever more heavily used, it's essential to preserve all of their particularly rich areas to the fullest extent possible. I'm especially familiar with the delights of Big Ivy, Panthertown, Siler Bald, Upper Courthouse Creek, Daniel Ridge, and Shope Creek and can hardly imagine leaving any of them open to the ravages of further timber harvest. They should all at least be included in Backcountry Management. This is most likely true of other wilderness study, roadless, old growth, and environmentally significant areas as well, though I can't personally attest to some of these. Not only does the Forest Service need to recognize and protect their inherent value as special and beautiful parts of the earth; it should also be mindful of their potential as sources of medicines and other benefits yet to be discovered that might be far more valuable than lumber.

I look forward to reviewing the next iteration of these plans, hoping to see that future of the Pisgah and Nantahala forests is under good guidance and in good hands for me and for future generations.

Sincerely,

Marianne Newman

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