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Geographic and Management Area building blocks

9.27.17 Comments on FS Plan, Barbara Morgan

Thank you for the thoroughness with which you have conducted the process for the Forest Service Plan. As a lifelong hiker, and as President of the Carolina Mountain Club, the miles and miles of trails in our region are very important to me. So, too, are the many thousands of acres of forest under your supervision.

As a hiker, I appreciate the opportunities to hike on trails that are well built, safe, sustainable, and allow me to enjoy the forest. While some trails are appropriate for multi-use, such designations should be carefully considered to protect hikers from bicycles speeding around corners, to protect sensitive species of plants, and to protect the trail from erosion. I support the creation of a Recreation Users Council to facilitate those decisions. Hopefully, the overall management of such trails by the Forest Service should be strong so that potential conflicts and safety issues can be resolved.

Secondly, I strongly support measures to restore old growth forests in our area, forest wide. I'm aware that a majority of our forests were logged and abandoned during a time in history where old growth forests were not valued. I would like to see that a significant acreage of over 44,000 acres per decade be allowed to mature to old growth conditions. Each geographic area covered by the Plan needs to allow the maturation of old growth conditions in that area. Hiking in areas that have re-achieved old growth areas will be a pleasurable event for generations to come.

Thirdly, I support protection of our high importance trails such as the Mountains to Sea Trail and the Appalachian Trail. In addition, shorter, more local trails such as the Art Loeb, Bartram Trail, Benton MacKaye, and others deserve protection. It is important to protect the entire corridor of these trails, and to ensure that they are appropriately marked as to whether they are hike only, hike and bike, multi-use, etc. Whatever the designation, both the named trails and the access trails to them need to be monitored to ensure that only the allowable usage is actually happening.

Several areas have been included in the results of the planning process as being recommended for Wilderness Analysis. I support those areas being considered for this highest level of protection. In a few weeks, I'll be leading two CMC hikes to Maple Camp Bald, in the area of the Black Mountains. It would be nice to know that in the future, that area, and others, will be protected.

?Thank you for your consideration,

Barbara Morgan
CMC President?

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