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Organization:

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Comments:

Hello,

I am expressing my concern regarding the Foothills project.

If this project continues as planned, it will permanently affect the surrounding forest ecosystem and risk the aquatic health and integrity of the Chattooga River watershed, which is and should remain a federal wild and scenic area. By subjecting this area to logging and burning, this project will also wipe out hundreds of acres of irreplaceable old growth trees, and we will lose many of the last old growth trees in the Appalachians.

For these reasons and more, it is necessary that an environmental impact report is thoroughly completed and publicized before this project continues in order to give the public a chance to consider all of the impacts. In addition, the current project proposal does not comply with NEPA as it is denying public participation for the duration of the project and it has not disclosed specific locations where timber harvesting, herbicide application, and burning will take place. The public has a right to know what's planned and to have a say in what goes on in their backyard, especially when the plans could be so destructive and cause the endangerment of rare flora and fauna only found in these regions.

The Forest Service should prioritize biological diversity and safety before crop practices. These areas are valuable to public recreation and local economies because of the number of people who visit these lands. It would be detrimental to local communities to have ugly clear cut areas on their mountains and hills where there once was green and red and yellow. In addition, the unique forests provide excellent educational and research opportunities that are important to the future health and knowledge of the Appalachians as a whole, and they may contain keys to local history that have yet to be discovered.

Lastly, it is not enough to replant common trees such as oak and pine in these regions, when there should be a focus on reviving and supporting native forests, including the 630 acres of old growth that is at risk. It is more important than ever to address the restoration and preservation of forests that will mitigate the effects of climate change before the landscape is changed forever.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ruth Aaron