

December 21, 2018

p 1 of 2

Ben Cash
519 Blair Road
Mount Airy, GA 30563

Betty Jewett, Forest Supervisor
Attn: Angie L. Bell
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
1755 Cleveland Highway
Gainesville, GA 30501

Re: Foothills Landscape Project

Betty and Angie,

I am interested in the treatments that you have proposed in the Foothills Landscape Project because they are so close to my home. Within the CONF, I have hunted, fished, camped, hiked, devoted hundreds of hours to trail work and some time working in a bog and counting TES.

I commend your efforts to give the public opportunities to provide input early in development of a plan and I believe that if you pursue public trust that participation in the collaboration will increase.

This area covered in this plan is huge, making it practically impossible for me, or anyone else, to grasp the proposal, look at the area included in the plan and provide meaningful comments within the comment period. I'm sure that you know that public interest will increase once you decide on specific sites to treat and meaningful public input will become available which you were not successful in getting through your initial collaborative process. Once you have selected sites for specific treatments, I want the same opportunity to comment and I assume that everyone else who comments now would like that same opportunity. You may have discouraged others from commenting at all by omitting that important part from the plan.

I support the proposed road closings and setting aside of old-growth areas in the plan. I believe it could be good for the forest and the public to log many sites within the plan area but allowing up to 90,000 acres of forest to be opened to timber harvest is not good. It could not only allow a significant increase over recent rates but sustain that higher rate over the next decade. I also oppose subjecting up to 63,000 acres to herbicide treatments. That could involve an enormous amount of herbicide with exposure to FS employees and the public. Once you select sites for specific treatments, areas such as steep slopes may be subtracted from the number of acres proposed for timber harvest and areas such as streams may be deducted from the number of acres proposed for herbicide treatment, making the areas that eventually receive treatments much less

alarming. But, that is not what you are proposing. I am opposed to your timber harvest and herbicide proposals.

The expanded gap treatment appears to be a very worthwhile experiment and I support trying to learn what effects occur from it. However, 20,000 acres seems to be a large area to experiment with and I would be very surprised if the FS has the resources to monitor 20,000 acres for meaningful data.

I have one more comment, now, and that's about the feral pigs that are currently damaging and destroying scarce, sensitive ecosystems in the project area. I'm seeing this at more and more sites. Restoring these sites would not be easy now but it will get harder every day until this introduced species is under better control. I wish you luck with that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Cash".

Ben Cash