

# Shepherd L. Howell

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January 7, 2020

Recd  
1/9/20  


U.S. Forest Service  
1755 Cleveland Highway  
Gainesville, Georgia 30501  
Attention: Stephanie Israel

RE: Foothills Landscape Project #52509

Dear Ms. Israel:

I am sending this letter as my official response to the above referenced "Foothills Project" for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest. I am sending my comments to you in your capacity as the "designated contact" for that project. I trust I have directed this letter appropriately, and if not I would greatly appreciate your forwarding this to the proper authorities.

I do object to the Project to the extent that it allows significant actions to specific sites without giving advance notice to the public. The USFS has stated that they value public participation. Public notice of significant proposed management activities has been the norm for decades, and should continue. I have been commenting on USFS management for approximately 50 years and I consider it a cherished right. I believe that the USFS employees and officials that I have had contact with over the years would agree that it has been a mutually beneficial arrangement. The public could not make intelligent comments on management practices unless they receive advance notice of those plans and have the opportunity to respond. It is increasingly apparent that the Forest is more valuable as a refuge for natural recreation rather than for commercial resource extraction, so the "whole public's" opinion should be solicited and considered before significant management activities are implemented.

I do generally support the Project's stated objective of eco-system restoration, especially in reducing the amount of pine mono-culture sites and favoring the protection and re-establishment of diverse hardwood forests. I favor the decommission of poor road systems, and the protection and re-establishment of our few remaining roadless areas. I do not object to the use of herbicides to control foreign invasive species, but I feel its use on native species should be very limited. I generally do not oppose the use of prescribed fire.

Once again, I believe the public should continue to receive notice of specific management activities, and I do not favor the Project's proposed changes to the long established practices in that regard.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Yours very truly,

  
Shepherd L. Howell

cc: Jeff Gardner, Cohutta District Ranger  
3941 Highway 76  
Chatsworth, Georgia 30705

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