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February 19, 2021

USFS
123 Woodland Drive
Murphy, North Carolina 28904

Re: Comments on proposed Forest Service plan
(1950 Nantahala National Forest Stand Improvement EA)

This is to comment on the proposed Forest Service plan dated January 25, 2021.

The purposes as stated are generally appropriate and progressive, but of course, the actual operations on the ground will make all the difference. I recommend that all operations be performed in cooperation with organizations such as the Chatooga Conservancy.

As to the special management area of the "Trail of Tears," I recommend that a similar designation be adopted for the Chatooga River, and in addition that the "Southside Project" be reconsidered. My objections are that the USFS should not log in designated wilderness study or extension areas; to do so would "preempt" congressional consideration and future natural growth.

In my opinion, the recent timber sale in the Chatooga River area was unnecessary and destructive, and failure to reconsider the Southside project will do more harm. Failure to increase the protected width of the Chatooga River is definitely negative. Although logged over in the past, after a century, many areas are now approaching old growth status and could be lost if careful planning and supervision of all activities is not maintained.

As to road construction, I am against new logging roads in general, particularly in designated wilderness study or extension areas, per above comment. In addition to actual construction damage, continual chemical treatment of roads is harmful. Unnecessary roads should be closed, not new roads constructed. I object to herbicide treatments for timber production which reduce diversity (for example, Maples and Dogwoods).

As to interstate effects, the regional and national effects of proposed actions on the Nantahala Ranger District should be considered and coordinated beyond the boundaries of North Carolina, particularly as to South Carolina and Georgia regarding the Ellicott Rock, Zahner Blue Valley, and Standing Indian areas.

Yours truly,

Richard Melvin