

From: [R.L. Austin](#)
To: [FS-comments-southern-chokeee-watauga](#)
Subject: [External Email]Thoughts on Pond Mountain timber sale
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Dear Ranger Kelly,

thank you for taking comments on the potential sale of timber from the mountain and for extending the period of public comment. I am a resident of Virginia, currently living next to the Shenandoah National Forest. I grew up deep against the mountains. I have seen the shift in biodiversity as a result of logging and erosion and I still grieve the loss of various trees that were plentiful as a kid: the hemlock, being one that comes to mind in particular.

I encourage you guys to consider other ways of finding income and not give in to the trend of offering forest service for commercial logging. Consider how the areas around the mountain are of recreational and tourist use already. I have heard that there is going to be use of herbicide in a 2500 acre area round the analysis area; this herbicide leaches into the groundwater, adding toxins not only to the forest but the water table and farmlands. Rather than taking away from plant life in the area, the forest service should cultivate the oaks, cherries, hickories, walnuts, and basswoods that are already growing there.

I love and am continually excited by the life I see in these forests. I have seen a lot of change happen in recent years -- usually caused by a combination of man made erosion and spreading of fungi and toxins. The weakened forest then is more vulnerable to high winds and forest fires.

Thank you for your time and I hope the USFS can make a decision not driven by the market economy but, rather, by the natural world.

Warmly,
Rachel Austin