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First name: Janet

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I am extremely concerned about the proposed Foothills Landscape Project. We reside as well as recreate in the areas that will be affected by the proposal and have the following specific concerns:

1. The proposed use of herbicides to control undesirable plants. I agree that there are non-native species invading the forests (privet for example) but feel very strongly that wide use of herbicides would contribute to other serious problem and negatively impact water quality, already in jeopardy because of non-enforcement of set-back regulations for building, pavement run-off, and careless disposal of waste by users of the forest in part due to closures of designated campgrounds. Use of controlled burns and manual removal of these plants would seem to be a more natural and therefore preferred remedy.
2. The number of trees proposed for removal seems excessive, especially based on the fact of the clear cutting already going on around us combined with the lack of enforcement of stream protection regulations, resulting in the silting of streams in the area, including our own. Even though it is a designated trout stream, we have not seen a single trout in at least 10 years and even the population of rock rollers has declined, all due to siltage and other pollutions as can be evidenced by the visual water quality; we have not had it chemically tested yet partly out of fear for what we will find.
3. We support the restoration of the canebreaks, we have seen the canebreaks in our area and along our creek (Cane Creek) decline due to (once again) non-enforcement of protections which include mowing up to the creek's edge, depredations of cattle, and the probably illegal filling-in of designated flood plain.
4. Closure and decommissioning of recreation areas. This may absolutely be the worst of all. I was amused and then appalled when I read these areas need to be closed due to lack of use (???) and funding? I can only reply to this by saying that forest workers need to get out more. As baby boomers retire, more and more of them (we ourselves know of 5 people within the past year who have purchased camping outfits) are recreating in the National forests. People who cannot find spaces in designated recreation areas are going to dispersed camping, and the resulting trash, unspeakable and disgusting sanitation issues, stream bank erosion, and degradation due to these INCREASING informal camping spots is ruining our forests. It is almost impossible to find camping or even a picnic table on weekends anywhere in the national forest. Therefore the way to resolve this is NOT remove more of them, but rather add them or at the very least not remove them. With amazement we watched the dismantling of the Lake Blue Ridge Camping and recreation area which is now for 'day use'. What one is supposed to do there is unclear as there are no picnic tables, no sanitation facilities - do I really need to tell you what that has led to? and the walking paths which are the remains of roads are quickly deteriorating. As a result, Morganton Point is literally being 'loved' to death, and I know for a fact that the Cradle of Forestry has made overtures to reopen and manage Blue Ridge campground. Boggs Creek is beloved and one of the few places in Lumpkin County accessible for a family outing or picnic that does not involve a long drive down a dirt road, especially after the loss of Waters Creek and this disastrous policy. Jones Creek is used year round for camping, picnicking, and hunters and badly needs a pit toilet as it is FULL every weekend. Compare to the camping area around Jasus Creek in White County. The area there was becoming extremely degraded due to informal camping and these issues have been mostly resolved after the establishment of a designated campground with pit toilets. At any rate it seems unnecessary to go so far as to remove picnic tables and failure to maintain toilets is ultimately going to result in more work for forest service employees as they deal with having to clean up the disgusting results.
5. The huge increase in the cost of National Park and Recreation passes should result in opening or maintaining these recreation areas rather than decommissioning them. If it was not to pay for maintenance of these facilities, then what was the justification for the increase? An increase in fees should result in more services, not less.

Please add me to the mailing/email/information list for any discussions or information on these issues, and add my comments to the official record of responses.

Thank you

Janet Barger