

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/11/2025 3:15:58 AM

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Comments: I am writing in support of the Alternative C (No New Leasing) for the proposal to lease the entire Conecuh National Forest for oil and gas drilling. The Conecuh is the largest remaining area of longleaf pine/wiregrass flatwood habitat left in Alabama that provides critical habitat for many rare, threatened and endangered species including the Gopher Tortoise, Alabama's only remaining population of Gopher Frog and Alabama's only population of the Endangered Eastern Indigo Snake which has just recently been successfully reintroduced to the area. Drilling related activities would degrade and further fragment these fragile and critical wildlife habitats. Drilling for oil and gas among the area's hydrologically sensitive and critical amphibian breeding sinkhole pond habitats, bay wetlands and pitcher plant bogs is crazy because it could lead to them drying up. Drilling in the National Forest recreation areas including the Open Pond Recreation Area which is heavily used by the public is even crazier and shows a lack of respect for citizens who use the forest. There are plenty of surrounding less natural private lands with landowners who are willing to lease their mineral rights that are as of yet untapped for oil and gas, and if there is really a local demand for drilling sites, drilling on those less sensitive areas would make much more sense than drilling in the fragile remaining natural habitats of the Conecuh National Forest.

<https://southern-science.com/2023/04/07/the-tale-of-the-tortoise-and-the-pine/>