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First name: D.L.
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Title:
Comments: Thanks for the excellent briefings on December 5th in Dahlonega.

During the process of developing the foothills plan over the past few years, I attended numerous sessions and met with several members of the USFS staff including Angie Bell, the previous project coordinator. My wife and I have also submitted several suggestions/comments on the website.

Since we own some 160 acres adjacent to Jake Mountain we have a vested interest in the FoothillsLandscape Project and the environmental impact it produces, there are four areas of particular concern:

1. Water quality - A long stretch of Jones Creek, a major tributary of the Etowah River, runs through my property. It continues to become more silted which adversely affects water quality and trout reproduction. Non-native plant species are also growing in the silt. The main sources are grading and ditching of Forest Service road 28-1 with little or no attention to silt control. Also, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) "dry dam" on Jones Creek above my property is full of silt. Seasonal rains flush this silt downstream. The dam should be removed to allow natural scouring of the stream bed. This issue is not addressed in the current foothills plan. However, the plan does cover refurbishing stream crossings on the trails to improve water quality. I considered a stream restoration project but was advised by a consultant that without addressing the silt issue, it would not be cost effective.

2. Hemlocks - The area around Jake Mountain was apparently not chosen for Hemlock treatment to protect against the Woolly Adelgid (HWA), therefore there are many dead and dying hemlocks. I have invested several thousand dollars treating Hemlocks along the Jones Creek corridor (some on forest service land). I trust the USFS will consider expanding their treatment area, particularly along streams and trails.

3. Controlled Burns - Thankfully most of my property was included in a large controlled burn in 2018 with good results. The foothills plan appears to adequately address this issue.

4. Jake/Bull Mountain and Moss Ridge Horse & Bike Trails - I have no objection to the proposed expansion of Jake/Bull Mountain parking areas or to the "beginner trail" concept. My concern is the route of any new trail. I met with Angie Bell on this subject and she told me there were no plans for new trails on the East side of Jake Mountain. Later, I saw a draft of a potential new trail which was within yards of my property and a residence near Forest Service Road 28-1. I was told by USFS staff that it was one of several possible routes and for now was just a line on a piece of paper for planning purposes and was subject to change. I trust logic will prevail for future trail routes. Certainly, safety of trail users should be a primary factor in developing new trails. I have conducted an onsite review with USFS staff to point out the hazards and the noise trail users might encounter with trails near my property, given the extensive shooting there. I have suggested some potential new trail routes at both Jake and Bull mountains. There is adequate land to construct such trails without building in unacceptable risk to the public.

I would be pleased to work with any USFS staff regarding the matters raised herein.

Blessings of the seasons to all,
/s/ D. L. Grindle