Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/19/2017 10:25:25 PM
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Comments: Betty Jewett, Forest Supervisor?ATTN: Angie L. Bell
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
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Re: Foothills Landscape Project

Betty and Angie,

Well here we are. The comment period for the 50 pages of the Proposed Action on the Foothills Landscape has arrived. I dare say most of the public will not be able to wade through this document, even folks like me, who care enough to have attended most of the Foothills Collaborative meetings and field trips. After all that collaborative work and seemingly sincere request for input, it seems like the USFS just went ahead and drew up a plan, mostly from the perspective of folks who think they can manage the forest better than it can manage itself. I know. I didn't expect that those of us who believe the forest does it's own right work in it's own good time, would get everything we wanted, but I didn't expect that we would be blindsided with no NEPA recourse for site specific objections. That's the part that is the worst.

As you might expect, I certainly appreciate much of the proposed recreation actions, road closings, and setting aside of old-growth areas. Thanks for listening to those concerns and including them in the plan.

I wish I felt like the voices of conservation-minded folks were heard as equally as those of the forest managers and government officials whose very livelihoods depend upon "managing" our forests, but the truth is that the general public was way outnumbered and not well represented in the meetings. Yes, I know. You tried. And you made a good effort, but that doesn't mean you succeeded and it certainly doesn't mean that the public was really involved in any significant way. I think if most people knew that this plan could allow up 90,000+ acres of forest to be subjected to logging and up to 63,000+ to be subjected to herbicide, there would certainly be an outcry and it would not be in support. But alas, I doubt many will have the time to read and understand and comment.

While I certainly appreciate your efforts at collaboration and have developed great respect for some the dedicated USFS employees that I have met during this process, I am quite concerned after reading this Project Plan that, once again, our forests are threatened by some of the very policies of those that are supposed to protect them. And to make it worse there is so little regard for the public's input that NEPA appears to be seen as an obstacle that needs to be avoided and certainly not respected.

At ForestWatch we try to do what the general public is unable to do - to put boots on the ground to review site specific management issues. By not giving us site specific targets for treatments, we cannot do this job. We thought we were collaborating but now it feels like we are being cut out of the conversation.

Sue Harmon
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