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Comments: Thank you for the public comment opportunities provided over the last year. I have followed and participated in some of these events. I am encouraged and support the Forest Service's proposed actions to set aside 5,050 acres of old growth, and to improve soil and water quality through better maintenance and closure of roads that are sediment sources. In my wanderings in the forest several roads need better maintenance.
But I am concerned with the idea limiting citizenry the opportunity to respond to the project as guaranteed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). I understand in the past, specific stands were identified during the NEPA process giving the public the opportunity to visit the stands in question and see if the proposed management is a good idea or not. On-the-ground investigations by such groups as ForestWatch have resulted in important changes to many projects. Under the current Foothills plan, the areas to be cut will not be specified until after the NEPA process has been completed, when public involvement would no longer be guaranteed by NEPA.
If this is the case, in the proposal, the 90,000 acres that could be logged is still unclear in where they are located and if any overlap is identified. Just using herbicides to control of "less desirable" native vegetation is not the only control method. Mechanical treatments and fire should be used to control these species where practical.
I have seen areas were non-native invasive species are the greatest threat to the Foothills. I encourage the Forest Service to take advantage of this opportunity to prioritize and develop detailed plans for controlling invasive species across the landscape.
Over the 35 years my family has lived near to the forest, we have visited numerous spots throughout the forest often. From hiking Blood Mountain to biking around Bull Mountain, we have enjoyed wandering the numerous roads. It has made us better being part of nature.
I appreciate the openness the agency has provided in the process and look forward to very positive results as we move forward.
Ian Cowie