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Comments:

One big problem with the Foothills Landscape Project:

it asks people to give up their rights to participate for the next 20 years.

In the formal project review The Forest Service is refusing to identify the specific places they intend to cut trees, apply herbicides, and light fires in the formal project review, so they would be able to do those things across a fifth of the entire Chattahoochee National Forest without having to listen to the public.

The Forest Service (FS) has spoken-a two hour public meeting and 39 days (over the Holidays) is deemed to be enough for the public to read, digest and offer comments on 1000 pages of documentation in the Foothills Landscape Project Environmental Assessment and specialist reports. There will be no extension.

So, between now and January 10, 2020, we who value this National Forest for all it provides us (economically, environmentally, spiritually, recreationally) must review and comment on the Chattahoochee National Forest plans for 157,625 acres of public Forest land. That includes over 60,000 acres of logging and chemicals application, untold temporary roads, 50,000 acres of prescribed fires, and up to 111 miles of trail reroutes.

The Forest Service has taken over a year-and-a-half to write their plans, and they include "new ways of doing things." But crucially, Project documents do not include the actual locations of most these actions. The Forest Service wants approval of this general Environmental Assessment before any site level analysis of potential impacts to soils, streams, trees, wildlife and recreation. If that happens, the Public will be signing away their legal ability to be involved for the next two decades or more. Even though today's Forest Service includes many knowledgeable and dedicated individuals, there is no guarantee that the Forest Service will be the same in ten years let alone 20. We the Public who care must stay involved and not give the Forest Service free reign over Our Forest.

You need to give the public site specific information before making a decision.

Adjacent land owners should be able to tell if the Forest Service is planning to spray herbicide in their backyard.

Mountain bike riders should be able to tell if they are planning to burn along their favorite trail.

Trout fishers should be able to tell if they are planning to log around their favorite stream.

This is not asking the Forest Service for anything new. This is what they have given the public for years. Example comment letters and topic-specific info on: special areas, recreation, and logging and herbicides-starting the first week in January, 2020

The Foothills Landscape Project spans from the South Carolina border to Chatsworth and encompasses 157,625 acres, more than a fifth of the entire Chattahoochee National Forest. The project includes vegetation, road, and recreation management, and proposes up to 55,000 acres of commercial timber harvests and 63,000 acres of herbicide application. It also includes some of our most cherished places:

the lower Chattooga River, well-known for whitewater rafting, and one of our major wildlife habitat corridors

the Jake and Bull Mountain trails, enjoyed by mountain bikers and horseback enthusiasts, and one of the most popular multi-use trail systems on the forest

Grassy Mountain, home to the biggest block of old growth forest we have left in north Georgia

The Foothills are the gateway to the mountains, and the effects of this project will be difficult to avoid when visiting the mountains. Previously, the Forest Service has pursued logging and land management projects one watershed at a time, leaving similar areas untouched. But with Foothills, they're doing the entire landscape-and if they take the wrong approach, the whole area will be impacted. The scale of the project and lack of information identifying what and where require us to call on your presence and participation to continuing protecting and preserving the Chattahoochee National Forest.