

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/2/2020 10:35:47 PM

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Comments: I am very concerned that the Forest Service seems to be short-cutting the process for public comment and scientific input into the proposed Foothills Landscape Project. The Service needs to use established NEPA processes to vet site- and time-specific locations for proposed timber harvest, herbicide and treatments, and road construction, so that the public has a clear and comprehensive picture of potential impacts. It is well known that whereas harvest, pesticide and herbicide treatments, and road construction may be relatively benign, and indeed necessary at some sites (e.g., for control of hemlock and ash infestations), topographic, hydrologic and other conditions at other sites can result in adverse and long-term impacts that may outweigh any benefits. With respect to herbicide treatments, I am very concerned that proposed actions may not be considering recent advancements in the understanding of the critical role of mycorrhizal networks, and result in unforeseen long-term impacts to this critical part of the forest ecosystem.

The southern Appalachian forest ecosystem is complex and is culturally, recreationally, and economically vital to the region and the Nation. It is incumbent on the Service to act with care and consideration of the public interest in this vital resource. The public and independent experts must be given ample opportunity to review the specific proposed actions, including proposed sites and timing of any cutting or other treatments. A rushed and blanket approval is not in the public interest

Sincerely,

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