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Organization:

Title:

Comments: January 2, 2020

Dear Supervisor Jewett,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment about the U.S. Forest Service's proposed Foothills Landscape Project. I am glad to see the Forest Service inform the community about future plans for this area, which is particularly important to me. However, several aspects of the Project as proposed are troubling.

First, the Project proposes to allow no further public input for 20 years. Shutting out public comment for such a protracted period is contrary to principles of democracy. This is particularly disturbing in a place close to Atlanta, where surging population growth increases the need to preserve green space, particularly green space that is connected to other green space. Two decades of no public involvement is also particularly disturbing at a time when our climate is undergoing rapid change. The costs and benefits of the proposed activities in 2040 may be very different from the perceived costs and benefits today.

Second, I am very skeptical about some specifics of the Project, especially herbicides. Many chemicals that are now banned as carcinogens were once considered harmless. Please do not apply poisons to these sensitive areas and their waterways. I am also wary of proposals to increase road access, even temporarily to allow logging. Our forests and the animals who live there already suffer from too much road access, with its accompanying pollution, noise, roadkill, and other disruptions.

Most importantly, the Project lacks specifics concerning most of its proposed activities and locations. More information is essential to evaluate the effects of many of the activities proposed. Additionally, more information is necessary to make sure that some of Georgia's most beautiful sites are protected. I refer particularly to the Georgia Mountain Treasures, identified by Georgia Forest Watch. These places are still wild enough to offer rare opportunities to connect to nature, and the Foothills Project should specifically commit to protect the Mountain Treasures from logging or other intrusions.

As an Atlanta native, I have often enjoyed hiking trails within the three Foothills areas, especially Springer Mountain and Grassy Mountain. I love the experiences of simply walking in the woods and paddling on a river, and I want these joys to be available to future generations as well. These experiences are ruined when logging, roads or herbicides intrude. I also want the wildlife and plants of these forests to face no new challenges, because so many animals and plants are already struggling with habitat loss and unaccustomed heat and drought. As much as possible, I want the Mountain Treasures and their surroundings to be left alone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alice Elizabeth Knight