

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/5/2020 6:14:34 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Supervisor Jewett,

Thank you for allowing me to comment on the Foothills Project. The main concern we all have is the preservation of the National Forests. More specifically my concerns are the public input and the profound impact the current proposals could have on the ecology of a very sensitive place.

I live on a multi-generational property that borders the Chattahoochee National Forest. The property was purchased in the early 1900s when the area was a complete clear cut. The family documented the building of the original cabin as well as the family and the property over the next 100 years. Today I hike the trails on the property as well as many trails through the national forest. Many of those trails are abandoned logging roads, some are still active Forest Service roads. Through photo-documentation and personal observation I have witnessed the destruction and healing of our forests. While I know the Forest Service isn't proposing clear cuts any new roads or changes in the ecology will have a profound effect on the forest.

Since moving to Rabun county as an adult I have become immersed in the historical culture of the Cherokee, early white settlers in the area and how they used the land's resources. I am also learning the edible and medicinal plants of the north Georgia mountains. These are resources that have been used for thousands of years. To upset the delicate nature of these habitats is to lose these valuable treasures forever. I have witnessed the silting of ponds and creeks as the result of roads and construction. Mechanical erosion takes MANY years to heal, sometimes never.

I attended the meeting in Rabun County with the Forest Service concerning the Foothills project and did not really understand the format of the meeting. I thought it was helpful to ask the individuals questions about their specific areas but we were not able to publicly ask questions afterwards. There were serious questions we ALL thought needed to be addressed. It felt more like a "dog and pony" show rather than a meeting for public input. We would like to be a part of the process instead of being told what is going to happen. I realize you are allowing public comments but to expect everyone to read a 1000-page proposal, digest the information and make valuable comments in the short period of time is unrealistic and unfair. Please do not cut the people out of this process. In Rabun county we rely on our National Forest and the surrounding lands for recreation, for income and our homes.

I addressed these issues from a personal standpoint. I am not a scientist or botanist so I will allow those more in the know speak to those specifics. Thank you again for your time and I look forward to working together with the Forest Service to preserve these treasures.