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First name: Janet

Last name: Westervelt

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Betty (I hope that is ok since we are on a first name basis at the meetings :- ) ,

I would like to comment on the Foothills Landscape Project on the Chattahoochee National Forest. I live very close by and often visit these lands for hiking, paddling and camping. As you know, I care deeply about the management of this Forest. I consider the forest to be my "Church" and Nature to be my "Religion". It is a massive part of my life and well being. As well as for that of most of my friends and family that join me there!

Having participated in most of the "Conversations" about the Foothills project, I did not quite understand at the beginning that this was all to create a broad paint brush stroke of rules for all of the areas. I am concerned with the lack of information about exactly where and when you will be cutting trees, reworking trails, and burning areas near many of my favorite trails and camping areas. I am worried that when I am planning trips in the forest, I will be unable to know if my trip is in a project area. I want to keep the long standing practice of being notified and given an opportunity to have a say in where management and disturbances occur in OUR forests. I would like to know because many of the activities planned in this project do not provide a pleasing environment for my friends and I to enjoy. I have been reminded of this every time I go down to places like Raven Rock on the Chattooga.

I realize that the current Administration has been cutting funding but there are many groups out there doing research and observations in these areas. Many have been a part of this collaboration process and have contributed information about such places as those listed in Georgia's Mountain Treasures. These areas should receive special consideration and continued collaboration with folks using these areas. My understanding from the last meeting I attended, is the FS is only required to hold one meeting a year about ongoing projects. This is not enough.

My hopes are that the FS can specifically identify areas like those that will be clear cut, having older growth cut, building or closing roads and campgrounds, etc., and notify the public a head of time. I also hope that these areas can be kept away from trails, roads and waterways to keep the natural beauty of the Landscape intact. These areas are my "Church" and are why I spend time in the Foothills Landscape.

I appreciate all of the work that the FS and it's amazing staff have put into this massive project. I believe they have the best interest of the forest in mind. And yet I see that it can be an over whelming task and this may be a method to help simplify things for you. I am not so confident about the process... I believe the public should still be able to participate in the entire process with the full knowledge of the specifics of each location.

When I go out into the forest (my church) today, I will pray that the FS will continue to consider all of it's users and will protect the integrity and beauty of OUR National Forests!

Thanks for taking my comments,