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First name: Duarte

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Organization: None

Title:

Comments: Greetings,

I am writing to express deep concern over the management of public forest resources surrounding the Chattooga River. I am a Equitable and Sustainable Tourism Mgt professor at NC State, and my personal scholarship in addition to amply additional scholarship the world over demonstrates that equitable and green prosperity can be achieved through community involvement in nature-based tourism. Harvesting of timber can be done in sustainable ways, and it is critical that the resource mgt agency build long-term rapport with local communities and with other stakeholders - the current approach to submit a plan and request for public comment during the holidays is an apparent example of an ill-intended measure to curtail public input - this measure continues to build distrust and resentment among the public towards your agency. Community involvement in natural resource planning is costly and time-consuming; however, that is the only way for public natural resources to serve the needs and interests of all, and for mgt processes to have the buy-in of all.

I understand that a lot of research has been done over the years about best ways to manage this forest resources. I am a PHD graduate of Clemson University, a former raft guide on the Chattooga, and I continue to be involved in community-based research as a professor at NC State. My students do fieldwork in that region, and I do recreation and have friends in that region. From this layered, professional, and deeply personal perspective i ask that this agency continue to be open to the voices if conservationists and to stakeholders in the nature-based tourism economic sector. Resisting, ignoring, resenting the tourism and conservation sector will further aggravate resentment and put the agency against the public that it should be serving.

Best regards, Duarte B. Morais