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Organization:

Title:

Comments: RE: Foothills Landscape Project #52509

As an ecologist, current and long-time resident of Georgia, and frequent and long-time user of our national forests for research and recreation, I know that each forest type and each locality has its own unique attributes and management challenges. I also know that forest management can sometimes lean too heavily on commercial harvest and clear-cutting, resulting in soil disturbance, erosion, and habitat fragmentation that comes directly from those activities and indirectly from road building in support of those activities. As an ecologist, I know that our public forests represent important stores of sequestered carbon (much of it below-ground, in the soil) that are critical to preserve in our efforts to tackle climate change. Given that private forests in the southeast are increasingly being clearcut at an ever faster rate and greater extent (largely to feed the European market for wood pellets to be burned for electricity), our public forests can and should be a bulwark balancing these losses from private timberland. Critically, in Georgia's public forests, so close to a major metropolitan area of millions of people, intact forests are the watersheds supporting that population, area industry, and quality of life for all. They are also vital recreational areas for that large and growing population. Their value for these uses far outweighs--and ought to take precedence over--any other uses or commercial profits to a few industries. It is vital for this population, who are after all the owners of the national forests, to be informed in granular detail of any proposed plans for managing their forests. Denying the public the right to informed consent of how their forests are managed is not only anti-democratic, but it is also bad for the resources of which you are only the caretakers.

Please release the site-specific details of your management plans, and allow the public owners of the forest additional time to have their voices heard after you have done so.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brad Bergstrom  
Valdosta, GA