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First name: Melissa

Last name: Pell

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Supervisor Jewett,

Thank the opportunity to comment on the Foothills Landscape Project. I hope my sincerity reaches you and that my comments will be helpful. If there's anything we should all agree upon, it's that we need clean air and clean water. That's why the remaining roadless areas in the Foothills are so important to our entire community. They are our absolute best chance to have truly clean water anywhere in the Foothills.

North Georgia has the most biodiverse freshwater ecosystem in the country, yet we receive the least amount of funding and protection. That's why we have to fight so hard to protect our public lands. Many of our local fish species are endemic only to this area and are fragile in the face of anthropomorphic disturbance. Once we lose them, we can never get them back. Although they are small, and many of us don't think of them, they play a crucial role in our ecosystem. Please don't make new roads in our pristine mountains. The document you provided to describe the project says roads dump more sediment into streams than any other management activity. Even "temporary" roads disrupt water flow and can turn into raw gashes that pollute our streams. Sediment buildup endangers the health of hundreds of organisms (and humans) that are affected by it, and the cost for correcting these damages largely falls on the community.

Please don't harvest trees in our roadless areas. Surely there are better places than our roadless areas to cut trees and have big machines drag them through the woods. I don't understand why it's necessary to use our protected land that has been set aside for the community for commercial logging rather than sending them to areas that have been more historically disturbed. The places that are scraped off to load the logs take decades to recover, and much of our wildlife depends on the resources of this area. Humans also need the photosynthetic value of trees, especially in the face of more rising global catastrophes such as the devastating fires in the Amazon and Australia. We need all the help we can get to manage the increase in atmospheric carbon due to the fires, and these events should open our eyes to the reality that our valuable ecosystems are delicate and in dire need of protection.

At the very least, I ask that you give our community more time to research and provide input for this project. This decision has the potential to affect many of us who live here, and we should be allowed ample opportunity to discuss such a large disturbance to our public lands. I also maintain that we have the right to know what practices are being used so close to home; thus, this project should not be concealed behind a privacy barrier. This is our community's land, and no single person, company, or organization should solely decide its fate. We should instead work together over a longer timeframe to develop a plan that suits us all.

Warmly,

Melissa Pell