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First name: Jacob

Last name: Blaydes

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I am a UGA student who will soon be living and working in Helen Georgia. In my environmental history course, I learned that the forest service started out as a shill for timber barons overly committed to an unscientific obsession with fire suppression against the wishes of its most prominent founder, Gifford Pinchot. I am happy to see it has moved toward ecological land management, particular in the prescribed burn management of southern yellow pine proposed for this project. I will be taking a prescribed burn course at Ichauway this Spring and have already seen what fire can do for the Longleaf savannas down there, having listened to a landowner give an account of the return of gopher tortoises to his land once he started using fire again and gazed into their wide holes in the sand.

I must admit that I know little of this project as I just heard of it today from a wildlife hunting interest group. I am nonetheless concerned about the conservation of our hemlocks and the restoration of our chestnuts, the protection of our rare orchids and carnivorous plants, and the creation of habitat for our rich diversity of fauna. I have a sympathy for the preservationist side of the debate that began in Hetch Hetchy Valley all those years ago, yet we must acknowledge that humans have been a keystone species in these ecosystems long before the USA came along and their intervention is needed to mitigate all the exotic introductions they continue to make, and that means thinning the forest to create a more biodiverse ecosystem (to say nothing of the need for a thrifty water budget for such important headwaters) and actively managing the land.

At any rate, thank you for reading this letter and considering the input of the citizens of our great nation. I hope that this project will do what it says it'll do and not be a regression toward the days when our natural resources were sold off for a pittance.

Sincerely,

Jake Blaydes