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First name: Bruce
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear Supervisor Jewett,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Foothills Landscape Project. Since I retired 10 years ago, I spend an average of 3 days/week in various areas of the Chattahoocheee Natl Forest. Depending on the season, I might be botanizing, photographing, hiking, searching for historical locations, or other recreational activities. I also volunteer with the GPCA and have spent many work days with Forest Service personnel at bogs and other special areas.

I appreciate what the Forest Service does to care for our National Forests, especially knowing the budget limitations you often have to work with.

I have several issues with the Foothills Project as currently proposed.

First is the lack of detail on where the FS intends to cut trees, conduct prescribed burns, spray herbicides, and build (temporary) roads, as well as other actions. It's hard to offer specific comments when we, the public owners of the Forest, don't know where the various actions outlined in the Plan are going to take place. There are many "special" areas in the Foothills, from scenic, botanical, biological, and environmental standpoints, and you have offered no clues on how specific areas will be affected.

A related huge problem is barring the public from utilizing the current NEPA process to comment on the specifics of the Project in the future. While the Forest service usually has good intentions, there have been MANY instances in the past when public involvement & input has changed FS plans for the better. Saving old growth areas, preserving rare species, preserving vistas, and protecting streams are just a few actions that come to mind. You are basically asking us, the public, to give up our right to participate for the next 20 years, which is unacceptable. These forests belong to us.

With the scope of this project, I really worry about what the Foothills are going to be like for the next few decades. The size of the areas planned for cutting, burning, herbicide application, new roads, are unprecedented. I see issues in the Forest everyday that are due to current budget shortfalls (FS roads becoming impassable due to no maintenance, 4-wheelers and other prohibited vehicles running rampant in some areas), so I am concerned about the resources and follow-up required to get the affected areas back to a "normal" forest environment.

Logging is another concern. The tremendous amount of logging planned sounds like we are going back to the 1970s-80s when logging wiped out much of our forest cover, leaving ugly scars for decades. And the associated "temporary" roads are sure to be a problem, what with associated sediment run-off and other issues. We certainly DON'T need roads in Roadless Areas. Which part of "Roadless" isn't understood here? As mentioned earlier, I am seeing more and more ATVs and 4-wheelers in prohibited areas of the forest, even Wilderness Areas, and they are really making a mess and destroying the forest floor. These "temporary" roads will be just another avenue for their destructive.

The widespread plan for herbicide use also seems excessive. I realize that some herbicide use is necessary, and we often use it on GPCA workdays. I really am concerned about overuse and the herbicide getting into waterways and causing a host of problems with both plants and animals. The Vegetation Plan specifies Chemical application over 65,000 acres!!!??? That is extremely excessive in anyone's book!

Those are just a few of the areas of this Plan that concern me. Thank you for your consideration.