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Comments: To U.S. Forest Service:

Comments on Forest Plan-- I own approximately 225 acres of land in Newton County, AR and am the general partner in ownership of several hundred acres of forest land in the southwest corner of the state. I also participated and contributed to the establishment of the Eastern Wilderness Bill as a member of the Alabama Conservancy many decades ago. Timber management has long seemed to be predominate in forest use planning, and the scope of much of the planning related to the Ozark National Forest in particular. The times are a'changing for how we humans must manage the vegetation across the globe, especially in our forests since they are the lungs of the planet and therefore also of us and all living organisms. I encourage the Forest Service to approach management as the preservation of ecosystems, not timber production systems. There is absolutely no room, therefore, for any consideration for allowing oil, gas, or other mineral extraction in the nation's forests. Fossil fuel production is diametrically opposite to any use of forests and should be outlawed, no matter what motherlode private industry wants to dig or drill out of the ground under the forests. Just as smoke isn't good for human lungs, neither is burning good for some forests especially over thousands of acres. I have not seen a historical review of the Ozark National Forest's naturally occurring burning incidents, but have been told they have been rare compared to forests in the west, for example. Burning and smoke are possibly just as bad for the forests' ecosystem/ lungs and should certainly not exceed natural historic rates. Clearcutting presents a vicious wound to soil and watersheds so I believe single tree selective harvest or very small limited openings in canopy will protect ecosystems best IF road-building is not allowed to every corner of the forests to access frequent cuts. Roads change drainage patterns and seemingly could divert water from areas of forest and starving them from the saturation they need and channeling sediment into waterways. Clearcutting and its cousins by different names tend to lead to monoculture, another way of destroying forestry in preference to farming trees. Please do not engage in either clearcutting or monoculture. One of the biggest ways the times are a'changing, of course, is the final awakening of the nation to our changing climate, and the long overdue realization that we need every tree we can save and plant as many as we can raise. Combined with population pressures like those in Arkansas where urban areas like Pulaski County and exploding populations like those in NW Arkansas, natural areas are becoming more valuable as human experience places than as industrial resource troughs. Extraction needs to take a far back seat to environmental protection and forests need to be left as natural (read that as meaning no motorized toys ripping through the woods) as we can keep them. The land and woods serve as relief valves of the human pressures of urbanization. Wilderness areas need wilderness-sheds surrounding them similar to watershed types of protections. Please do not develop roads and timber-managed lands next to wilderness, but instead buffer those very special and unique places with broader hands-off protection zones. Of all the mentioned practices in the report, the most insidious is the practice of chemical herbicide usage on invasives. I agree that invasives need to be removed, but the chemicals being used cause more harm than the invasives. Every few months, more and more information is coming out about the Roundup type chemicals, and its time the Forest Service listened. Saturating the land, air, and water with man-made chemicals that are showing up in food and the tissues of living organisms is a curse we are allowing on ourselves and future generations. Please stop this practice. It is simply not ethical. Thank you for consideration of public comments. Fran Alexander