Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/13/2021 11:30:20 PM
First name: Doug
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear Sir;

Re: Comments to 2021 Revised EA for Foothills Landscape Project

The latest draft of Foothills Landscape Project has helpful updates from the original issue of December 2019. It would be helpful to USFS and those of us following this Project if the USFS focused first on project areas and activities with the broadest support.
We support the following recommendations, offered by Georgia ForestWatch:
Exclude areas identified in book "Georgia Mountain Treasures" from commercial timber harvests. These identified and "ground-verified areas" must be preserved and protected. Each area is a unique habitat.
Restrict commercial timber harvests to "fire adapted" forest types.
Remove from Project scope those areas 1/2 mile or more from an existing road. Leave these areas to grow as is.
Do Not "thin" or cut 50% of trees in mesic (moist) forests. Let these forest areas continue to grow without manmade alteration. Our Southern Appalachian Forest already has a diversity of tree types, age of trees, and variety of understory that takes decades to develop. Where mankind sees 80 to 100 years as a life span; our Southern Forests see 100's of years. Nature has been actively managing our Southern Appalachian Forest for well over 11,000 years, since the end of the North American Ice Age.

Below are our suggestions that we feel would benefit the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest (CONF).

A). Please remove the Minimum number of trees from CONF by actions of Foothills Landscape Project. Our CONF is about 2% of the land area of Georgia. The 157,625 acre (18% of CONF) identified as Foothills Landscape Project is a Huge part of CONF. Foothills Landscape Project mandated changes of tree thinning in forest, trees cut to replace with pines, and new roads all negatively impact the CONF.
B). Removal of trees in our CONF reduces Carbon absorption by the Forest.
C). Leaving the CONF as is, should be seriously considered. A great example of an existing Forest, that is thriving without changes initiated by man, is the Great Smoky Mountain National Park (800,000+ acres). (GSMNP).
For 80+ years GSMNP with its mountains, diverse forests, trees, plants, animals & life therein has existed as its own entity. The staff at GSMNP observe and protect the Forest. 10,000,000+ people come per year to see these mountains, walk under the full canopy of diverse trees, go fishing in clear mountain streams, take day hikes and backpacking trips. No man made actions to change the Forest are part of the GSMNP mission: "To observe and protect".
GSMNP (Forest and Land) work because of Nature!