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Comments: I am writing to voice my support for USFS proposed Foothills Landscape Project, which aims to conserve more than 5,000 acres across the foothills of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. I have been informed that the restoration project concerns a North Georgia ecosystem consisting of old-growth forest and woodland inhabited by native species of plants and animals. As a scientist, I believe that restoring the pine and oak-pine woodlands is essential to boost declining species in the Southeast, which are impacted by climate change and degradation of the land. North Georgia residents and wildlife will benefit from restoring the health of the watershed, which is urgent during this time of climate stress.

The proposal for opening up certain areas of the tree canopy will enable restoration of the local species of yellow pine. Furthermore, it will restore woodland communities and help recover the struggling populations of endangered species, such as the Indiana bat, that need this type of habitat. I reiterate that fire suppression is a "bad actor" in forests because it leads to loss of open woodlands, savannas, and grasslands required for biological diversity. However, when removing the excess canopy, I believe that significantly mechanized methods should not be used, such as bulldozers and massive chain saws. I understand that some prescribed burns will be used for the understory and canopy, and I support those that will not destroy the oldest trees. Old trees are living legends and store large amounts of climate-wrecking carbon dioxide.

I thank you for considering my comments and look forward to receiving updates on the progress of the project.