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Comments: I submitted detailed comments on the draft Forest Plan and am disappointed that the USFS did not address the interests of the people of NC that the Pisgah-Nantahala Forest Plan should decrease timber harvests and strengthen protection for old-growth forests and rare species, and therefore opportunities for carbon storage and recreation opportunities. Instead, you did the opposite.

The final plan doesn't reflect the interests of the public, who have overwhelmingly supported more and stronger protections for Pisgah-Nantahala. Instead, the plan prioritizes logging and fails to protect old-growth forests, rare species and clean water.

The Pisgah-Nantahala is the country's most popular national forest; nearly 5.2 million people visited it last year. The forest provides drinking water for cities, businesses and communities across the Southeast.

Under the plan, over half of the forest - 540,000 acres - will be open to logging, and the plan quadruples the acres of forests that would be cut down annually. This is unacceptable.

The plan fails to protect most of the forest's important recreation and conservation areas. It removes protections for 100,000 acres of Wilderness Inventory Areas and places 45,000 acres of North Carolina Natural Heritage Areas in logging-priority designations. The plan also allows 40,000 acres of old-growth forests to be logged.

The plan also excludes over a quarter-million acres of mature, intact forest from its old-growth network to accommodate a massive increase in timber harvests, which will also have significant impacts on rare and endangered species. At least 20 rare species have most of their habitat placed in logging-priority designations.

Significant portions of the Appalachian Trail, Art Loeb Trail, Bartram Trail, Benton MacKaye Trail and Mountains to Sea Trail corridors will now be open to logging.

The climate and carbon-storage benefits of mature, intact forests are largely neglected in favor of increased timber harvests.

Our publicly owned national forests are far more valuable standing and protecting drinking water, clean air, scenic views, iconic trails and old-growth forests.

Over 92% of comments on the draft plan supported more permanently protected areas for the Pisgah-Nantahala.