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Comments: I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed Tarleton Integrated Resource Project. I live very close to this area, and I visit the lake and its surrounding lands often. I well remember the incredible public effort to save Lake Tarleton some 20 years ago. When this effort ended in success, people believed that the area was preserved for the long term. Many people (including me) are surprised to see that the area is once again being threatened.

As a general comment, I have no objection to timber harvesting in National Forests. I understand that timber production is one of the priorities of a national forest, and as such, some degree of logging is called for. With that said, the proposal for the area surrounding Lake Tarleton involves far too much intensive logging in a very sensitive area. The proposed 100 foot buffer zone is nowhere near adequate. I recommend a buffer zone of at least 300 feet, and I believe 500 feet would be better still. Additionally, substantial buffer zones are needed along all tributaries that drain into the lake. I also have concerns about the proposed clearcuts. I believe clearcuts should be kept to a minimum and those areas where cutting is to happen should be selectively harvested.

Given the heavy cutting that is proposed, and the minimal buffer zone that is planned, how can the USFS seriously defend its Finding of No Significant Impact? The FONSI truly stretches credulity. You are surely aware of the tremendous research that has been going on for more than 50 years at the nearby Hubbard Brook watershed. That research has clearly documented the impacts of heavy timber cutting. We all know that as the project is planned, there will be a very significant impact. If you are committed to continuing with the project as proposed, then a detailed EIS is mandatory. If you truly intend to conduct a project that will not have a significant impact, then the project must be modified with much larger buffer zones and very carefully implemented selective cutting.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.