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Organization:

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Comments: To USFS - Pisgah National Forest -

You've asked members of the public to comment on the proposed revision to the current PNF plan for managing 'old growth' forests.

We've followed the laborious process you and the public undertook in creating the current plan (circa 2023). Many of the revisions to the preceding plan were welcome, but there seemed to be a general lack of effort to protect 'old growth' timber stands. While almost none of these stands are truly old growth - many are mature(ing) climax forest sections.

In my opinion, these mature forest stands, mostly hardwood, are among the most valuable resources in our national forests. For reference, our family has privately owned land along the Pigeon River near Shining Rock Wilderness. This land's forest was undisturbed since the chestnut blight. When we compare its health to the woodlands owned by our adjoining neighbors, and to USFS lands in the Pink Beds, the differences in health and diversity are startling. We believe that difference is primarily due to successive logging operations. Large scale mechanized timber harvesting appears to weaken a forest with each sequential activity.

Land that has been logged multiple times has poorer soil, siltier streams, more non-native plants, and an overall lack of relative appeal.

Since there are almost no privately held lands in WNC which have both the size and professional staff to execute stewardship over tens of thousands of acres, it's imperative that the PNF plan embraces the goal of managing resources towards protection/restoration of a pre-colonial forest. This shouldn't preclude judicious use of fire or other 'best practices' to manage for health, or to eliminate non-native (a/k/a) invasive species.

We want to encouraged the Forest Service to embrace the need for greater protection for our least disturbed public lands from resource extraction. Those lands may included both forests and naturally occurring open spaces.

Regards,

The Baird Family