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Comments: I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts in amending the Nantahala-Pisgah National forest plan to address the presidential mandate to protect the nations old growth forests. I do not speak from a professional or scientific position, but I do understand that managing our public forests is incredibly complex and that a diverse and broad vision must be employed. It is apparent that much of the old growth primary forest in Western North Carolina exists due to prohibitive topography. Harvest was neither logistically nor economically viable. This has not changed. Further, in that old growth forest communities comprise such a small percentage, both regionally and nationally, of the overall national forest landscape it is imperative and absolute they be exempt from logging to protect both their critical ecological significance and human needs. These are not "just trees".

I do support ecologically sustainable logging on national forest lands. There is vast acreage, again both regionally and nationally, that is available and suitable for timber harvest. However, it is critical that logging is based on where and not how much. Sensitive areas, such as old growth, must be excluded from harvest.

Not all areas of the world have the luxury, availability, and privilege of sustainable and diverse public lands. We do. Understandably, it is tremendously difficult to satisfy all the objectives of public lands management in a balanced manner. Old growth forest is frighteningly rare. Recognizing this, these forests need managed protection for their ecological value and for their contribution to our physical and economic health.