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Comments: I would like to submit the following comments on the Pisgah Restoration Initiative (PRI). I live in the Southern Appalachian Mountains and spend a great deal of time recreating and volunteering on forest service lands in TN and NC. My experience, and the feeling expressed by many friends I work and hike with in the forest, is that forest service logging and burning are the biggest problems for wildlands, wildlife, and recreational forest users in this area. The logging and burning also have a large negative impact on outdoor recreation and tourism, which are huge positive components in local economies. The PRI more than doubles the potential annual controlled burning, and throughout the proposal in numerous sections is the assertion that timber harvest will be allowed to help attain goals of the plan. I am opposed to any plan that increases controlled burning or logging in these forests.

I also want to point out the adverse effect that would be seen on the Appalachian Trail (AT). The plan makes only a few references to the AT and mostly to point out that burning, logging, and road building would be allowed near the AT if needed. The AT is a national treasure that the forest service should steer clear of, and none of the additional logging, burning, or road building authorized in this proposal should be seen from the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

I challenge the forest service claim that these are fire-adapted habitats and reference a plant study by Foster Levy on a local 10,000 acre addition to the national forest that states "in the tract there are few if any fire-adapted species and there would be no conservation value from controlled burning." I feel like the PRI is not a means to restore forest lands to a natural state but rather a means of increasing burning, which benefits timber, and also increasing logging as part of the process under the guise of reducing wildfire risk, which is low in this region.

If the goal is to restore forests to a more natural state, they should be left alone to allow natural processes to accomplish that. The proposal makes the nonsensical assertion that these forests have been altered into an unnatural state by human manipulation and proposes more human manipulation as the remedy. This is a misguided management philosophy, and the plan will not accomplish the goals stated as its purpose. I highly recommend the "No Action" alternative and do not want to see this plan adopted.