Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/13/2024 12:03:26 AM
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Comments: The Pisgah National Forest is a beloved destination for many to enjoy the wonders of nature, I am personally very fond of it and frequent it whenever possible. As such, I went through most of the public comments to gather info on how to best speak upon this matter. I found that everything I would want to convey and more is thoroughly covered by the concerns and suggestions made in Susannah Knox of the Southern Environmental Law Center's (SELC) public comment. To reiterate some particularly large concerns much of the public comments and myself share:

Fire restoration work needs to only be done in historically fire-adapted ecozones. Commercial tree harvest can not impact other ecozones harshly for this project to be genuine or helpful. Significantly more preemptive planning needs to go into protecting sensitive species and their habitat ranges before this project can safely occur. The first step needs to be site-specific surveys to customize the work being done in each area to accurately reflect the specific needs of each sensitive species. Those areas will need to be unaffected to the fullest extent possible by this plan. Otherwise, when the proper data is eventually collected later and endangered species are found to have lived within the forest (reference the Fish and Wildlife Service's imminent listing of the Northern Long-eared Bat for example), you will have a huge mess midway through the project to deal with and be responsible for unknowingly committing tremendously more harm than good.

The idea of restoring fire-adapted forest is wonderful, but without more of the proper steps implemented this could potentially come to be viewed as -and I hate to suggest- a hasty plan that thinly veils a desire to introduce reckless amounts of commercial logging into the area. I strongly implore you to take the time to revise this plan in keeping with recommendations of the SELC's public comment.