

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/20/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Hope

Last name: Squires

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Old-growth forests, once gone, cannot be easily restored. They clean the air we breathe, they store vast amounts of carbon, they are critical for biodiversity, clean water, and reduction of wildfire risks. They are a national treasure we must protect from commercial logging, climate stressors, and encroaching pests. Near my home, the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests shelter several unique species at risk of extinction. Scientists consider the Appalachian mountain range and its old-growth forests to be part of one of the topmost critical ecosystems in the world to protect the future health of our planet. NOGA is a good start at protecting and restoring old-growth forests, but needs to be stronger. Please make sure NOGA leaves no room for ambiguity and closes any loopholes that could inadvertently lead to worsened management of our country's old-growth. Please protect these unique and essential places for the health and future of us all. There's no room for getting it wrong. Thank you.