

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/5/2025 6:10:45 PM

First name: Maria

Last name: Hines

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to the Conecuh Oil and Gas Leasing Analysis #63294. Leasing areas of Conecuh National Forest for oil and gas development would create serious risks to the environment, local communities, and the long-term health of this important public resource.

**Water and Wildlife Risks:** Conecuh National Forest is home to sensitive ecosystems, unique wildlife, and crucial waterways that nearby communities depend on. Oil and gas drilling could contaminate streams, aquifers, and watersheds through leaks or spills. This includes risks to Big Escambia Creek and groundwater resources, which are too important to gamble with. Given Alabama's heavy rainfall, pollution from drilling could easily spread.

**Climate and Air Pollution:** Our forests help absorb carbon and combat climate change, but leasing them for fossil fuels would work against that benefit. Burning more oil and gas would add to air pollution and climate impacts, which hit rural and lower-income communities the hardest. Conecuh should remain part of the solution, not the problem.

**Harm to Local Economies:**

The forest already brings in revenue through outdoor recreation, like hiking, fishing, hunting, and camping. Allowing oil and gas operations would harm its natural beauty, reduce tourism, and hurt local businesses. Short-term drilling jobs don't outweigh the long-term damage to a sustainable economic resource.

**Long-Term Consequences:** Once the drilling ends, the environmental damage could last for decades. Restoring polluted land and water is expensive, and the costs would likely fall on the public. Protecting Conecuh's natural resources for future generations is more valuable than short-term profits for oil companies.

I urge the Forest Service to reject this proposal and prioritize protecting Conecuh National Forest. Its long-term health is far more important than any short-lived economic gains from oil and gas.

Thank you for your consideration.