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First name: J.

Last name: Smythe

Organization:

Title:

Comments: September 17, 2019

Ms. Betty Jewett

Forest Supervisor

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

1755 Cleveland Highway

Gainesville, Georgia, 30501

RE: Union County Gun Range: Project: 54559

Dear Ms. Jewett:

We continue to STRONGLY OBJECT to this unnecessary and unsubstantiated project at this location. The applicant and the USFS have failed to document the need for or alternatives to this redundant shooting range when there continues to be a lightly used range barely 3 miles away. Documented under-used conditions on the nearby Chatuge range were submitted in comments of 6/14/19.

The USFS was/is under substantial political pressure to approve this project. Promoters of the proposed project stated openly at public meetings that: "we got to the elected officials before the Forest Service even got wind of this" and similar statements, such as: "we got their (F.S. staff) attention with that". We understand that Secretary Purdue, the Under Secretary for Rural Development, Congressman Collins and other politicians have applied DIRECT pressure to Forest Service management and staff. This political interference and coercion (perhaps collusion) contaminates and circumvents the entire NEPA process.

We are submitting additional evidence of the largely vacant range with additional photographs taken at various times since those previous photos. Nothing has changed in its use. If someone wants to shoot, join up and go shoot, there is space available. See attached current pictures of the largely vacant Chatuge Range.

There appears to be little improvement and refinement in the Final E.A. from the Draft and it is not possible to arrive at the same decision as the USFS officials from that document. We consider all previous comments (copy attached) to be open, requiring substantiated and documented responses from the USFS. The brief general responses do not respect or respond to the time and effort spent on previous comments. See attached general USFS responses. We request adequate responses to these comments (see attached USFS responses below).

52 Smythe, Johnathon

Alternative(s) not analyzed in detail.

Thank you for your comments. The project is consistent with the objectives and goals of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Plan. Demand for a target range in Union County is gauged to be high based upon grassroots interest in the Union County Gun Club, use at similar sites, and diverse contacts requesting information on the locations of target ranges on the National Forest. Alternatives analyzed are summarized in the Environmental Assessment.

Gun Range Alternative:

The proposed range is a waste of taxpayer's money and commitment of public lands for an unnecessary range. If Union County feels it needs a range, consider this:

Propose an extraterritorial annexation of the western portion of Towns County extending to the center of the Chatuge gun range. Compensate Towns County by ceding an equal area of the eastern portion of Union County

north of Brasstown Bald to Towns County. There should be no tax implications as both areas are contained within the National Forest's lands. In this manner Union County and Towns County can both claim that they each have a gun range. After all, Towns County was formed by taking a part of Union County. Just go take it back. Gun range problem solved.

Thank you for your consideration. Please have the fortitude and professionalism to do the right thing.

Attachments