

SAMPLE LETTER

TO: Allen Nicholas, Forest Supervisor
National Forests in North Carolina
160 Zillicoa Street, Suite A
Asheville, NC 28801-1082

SENT VIA EMAIL: objections-southern-north-carolina@fs.fed.us

<DATE>

RE: Southside Project, Nantahala National Forest
Decisional Environmental Assessment (EA)
Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN & FONSI)

Mr. Nicholas,

I am writing to object to the Southside Project (“the Project”), for the following reasons:

OLD GROWTH: The Project would cut existing old growth. Old growth forests are rich in biological diversity and are extremely rare. With only ½ of 1% of existing old growth left in the Southeast, stands of old growth trees should not be destroyed! I object to cutting old growth at Brushy Mountain and Granite City. In addition, I object to cutting stands that are over 100 years old, including compartments/stands 41/42, 41/44, 41/40, 41/47, 40/42, 40/41, 40/13 and 29/16.

HERBICIDES: The Project approves widespread, repeated herbicide applications in our national forest to kill competing trees and shrubs so that only specific “crop trees” will survive. I object to applying poisonous herbicides throughout the project area due to its persistent presence on our public lands, and the potential, resulting exposure and negative impacts to forest users, streams, soil, plants, and animals.

CRITICAL HABITAT & WILDLIFE CORRIDORS: The Southside Project would log in close proximity to known Green Salamander populations and habitat located throughout the entire project area. Logging here would destroy the critical forest habitat used by Green Salamanders and negatively affect environmental conditions at rock outcrops where known colonies exist. I object to logging in the vicinity of Green Salamander colonies and in this species’ potential arboreal habitat.

The Project would also disrupt and log a unique wildlife corridor (and existing old growth) on Brushy Mountain, which connects the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area with Terrapin Mountain and points beyond, and which has been identified by The Nature Conservancy and other scientists as one of the most important migratory corridors in the East. I object to logging this area. Preserving this corridor should be of the highest priority for protecting this unique migratory epicenter for dependent flora and fauna,

that is critical for helping perpetuate species viability as well as mitigate and adapt plant and animal species to the effects of climate change.

BURNING: The Southside Project analysis area includes prescribed burning of 722 acres at Bull Pen and 1,765 acres at Jack's Creek and the Whitewater River. The Project's environmental assessment (EA) fails to provide the public with a cumulative effects analysis of the extensive prescribed burning in the Project area, which is a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act. I object to the excessive burning in the Project area that disrupts our natural ecosystem processes.

PUBLIC INPUT: The EA describes numerous opportunities for public input in the development of the proposed Project. However, the Forest Service has largely ignored citizens' comments calling for preservation of old growth, critical habitat, potential wilderness areas, and citizens' opposition to excessive burning and widespread herbicide application. I object to the Forest Service's lack of consideration for public input, as well as the agency's dogged advancement of such intensive activity in this sensitive landscape that is coupled with their deeply flawed analysis of the Southside Project's significant negative impacts to this unique area of extraordinary conservation values. Coupled with this objection point, I request a public meeting with Forest Service decision-makers for the Project.

POTENTIAL WILDERNESS AREAS: The Ellicott Rock Wilderness Extension Area and the Terrapin Mountain Potential Wilderness Area are under consideration in the ongoing Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan Revision process. However, the Project would conduct logging and other intrusive activities in both areas. I object that the Southside Project fails to analyze the impacts of logging to these areas' unique characteristics and their future eligibility for designation as wilderness areas. The Forest Service should not issue a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for these areas in conjunction with the Southside Project, which would prejudice or limit future consideration and analysis of potential wilderness area designation for the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Extension Area and the Terrapin Mountain Potential Wilderness Area.

LOSING TAXPAYER'S MONEY: The Southside Project will do irreparable damage to native biological diversity at taxpayers' expense. Although the Forest Service claims that the Project's benefits to wildlife offset its expense, I disagree with and object to the agency's financial equivocation statement, because the Project would liquidate old growth, fragment essential wildlife corridors, etc. (see above), and does not include specific costs for road-building, timber sales planning administration, burning, herbicides, etc. I object to the Forest Service's rationale that attempts to financially justify this Project, which actually is a below-cost venture at taxpayers' expense.

Suggested Remedy: For the reasons stated above, I request that the Forest Service drop and withdraw the Southside Project as currently planned. Habitat and age class diversity can be achieved through different processes than those described in the Southside Project.

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