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Subject: Southern Forest Draft Assessment

John Greis/David Wear

Please Include the following comments in the Draft of the Southern Forest Resource Assessment.

I am very concerned with the USFS statement and conclusion that Southern Forest Management and Harvesting practices are "sustainable." Is the Forest Service claiming that Southern Forest are sustainable for the industry, or for wildlife and ecological diversity? Certainly not the later. I question the Forest Service's terminology of "sustainability" within this study. Is the service proclaiming that the fiber itself is sustainable or the practice? At what stage, and how was this conclusion derived? Forestry practices within the Southern U.S. are very different than the practices that take place in other regions of the U.S. The Industry justifies the clearing of a mature and diverse forest by claiming, "We plant 3 trees for every one we cut." Statistically this may be true, but there is no attention given to they types of trees being replanted, which are most always pine. By eliminating the diversity of the forest you are certain to eliminate the ecological and wildlife diversity as well and no one in the Forestry Industry, nor Forest Service seems to understand this concept.

Best Management Practices (BMP's) are not being implemented enough to ensure the long term health and sustainability of our forest, and the intensive management for pine plantations are not sustainable for a diverse forest ecosystem. While Urban sprawl is a serious threat and problem in the US, it is not comparable nor should it even be discussed in the same platform of Forestry Practices. I have much respect for the U.S. Forest Service, but this is blame and problem deflector and it's disappointing to see them use this tactic. At least 250 million acres of forest will be logged and managed for a pine plantation. The SFRA also sites that one in every four acres of Southern forests will be intensively managed plantations. Has the agency performed the necessary analysis on the loss of habitat for wildlife, as a 63% decrease in available habitat for species that do not prosper in pine plantations. One hears the argument that pine plantations are a great wildlife resource for squirrels and deer. Wildlife management already experiences cost bearing problems with controlling deer populations.

I am not ant-forestry or logging. I understand the needs for resources that are in demand. I do believe that the best available science must guide our decisions, especially on such a large scale issue. I do not believe all the science has been assessed, nor all of the issues, such as long term effects on soil, wetlands, biodiversity, wildlife, and sustainability in a less fragmented approach. There is no solid evidence that the wood industry provides an economic stability for communities, in fact, studies show the opposite, which questions the validity of the Forest Service assessment.

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