

# South Carolina Forest Watch

“Keeping Your Forests Green and Your Water Clean”

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January 24, 2002

John Greis, Co-Chair  
Southern Forest Resource Assessment  
USDA Forest Service  
Southern Region  
1720 Peachtree Road, NW  
Atlanta, GA 30367

RE: Extending the Comment Period for the Southern Forest Resource Assessment

Dear John:

South Carolina Forest Watch (SCFW) is a grassroots organization of conservation advocates that focuses on the management of public lands. Since 1989, we have worked with the Forest Service at the project level, primarily in the Sumter National Forest, but not to the exclusion of the Chattahoochee and the Nantahala/Pisgah. In 1994 we realized the need for cooperative efforts from all stakeholders of both public and private lands. Since then, we have worked with local and state agencies, municipalities and private landowners. In 1996 we sent a representative to the Seventh American Forest Congress. And as a member of the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition we have been fully engaged with the revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan since it began in 1996.

We submitted comments regarding the Southern Forest Resource Assessment (SFRA) in August 1999 and have monitored the progress of the study with interest since that time. Last year we signed on to the comments that the Dogwood Alliance submitted. We appreciate this latest opportunity to comment on the draft report. However, the sheer size of twenty-nine components of the overall report (well over 2,000 pages by our rough count) and the complexity of the material requiring review make the 60-day comment period inadequate for public review of the study documents. This is compounded by the release of the study in the busy period between Thanksgiving and Christmas when religious and family obligations add to the general work requirements of the general public and compete with the ability to budget time for this necessary endeavor.

We therefore request that the public review be extended at least an additional 30 days if not more to give us and the general public a more reasonable time to review and comment meaningfully on this important study. We note that most of the sections of the report we are reviewing were in “peer review” for nearly six months. Thus, we do not believe extending the public review period

to a length that is only half as long as what most of the professional reviewers had for their review is at all unreasonable.

We will look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible on this matter. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions regarding this request, or if I can be of further assistance on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy".

Kathryn McDeed  
Executive Director