

# FORM LETTER # 5



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02/20/02 11:50 AM

To: jgreis@fs.fed.us  
cc:  
Subject: Southern Forest Resource Assessment comments

Mr. John Greis

Dear Mr. John Greis,

Thank you for providing the public with an opportunity to comment on the draft of the Southern Forest Resource Assessment (SFRA). I am writing to urge you to include a fuller analysis of ecological and socio-economic sustainability and to acknowledge the threat posed by the continued expansion of industrial forestry in the final version of the report.

The SFRA documents that while 30 million acres of forest will be lost to sprawl through 2040, some 270 million acres of forests will be harvested to produce products such as paper, OSB and 2x4's. However, the SFRA falls short in its consideration of the impact of these forest trends on the ecological or socio-economic sustainability of Southern Forests. For example, the study identifies 14 "critically endangered" forest communities and many more imperiled species, but misses the opportunity to analyze the ecological impact on these resources of increasingly intensive forest management. A similar lack of attention occurs with regard to wetlands, key wildlife (birds, salamanders, etc) and water quality, to name a few important Southern ecological resources.

Similarly, the disproportionate focus of the Assessment on the narrow issue of timber sustainability leaves the analysis of socio-economic resources incomplete. While the assessment concludes that forest-based recreation will increasingly be in short supply, it fails to address basic questions. For example, given the escalating pressure on public lands in the Southern Appalachians, how many additional acres of protected forests are need to supply the demand for public recreation? And, with respect to local economies, how will forest-dependent communities fare as the wood products industry intensifies management and automates more processing facilities? The draft Assessment leaves the reader with these and many similar questions unanswered.

I hope you will rectify this oversight in the final version of the report, as well as provide appropriate attention to the threats generated by the increasingly intensive forest management in the South. We can all agree that the loss of forestland to sprawl poses a serious threat. But the impacts of over-harvesting and conversion to plantations are exacerbated by the cumulative effects of urbanization, as remaining natural forests become even more important to sustaining wildlife habitat, water quality, scenic beauty, recreation,

tourism and the value-added wood products industry.

Sincerely,

Bethany Orbison  
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