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01/31/02 11:13 AM

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Subject: Southern Forest Resource Assessment

31 January 2002

Citizens For Holly Springs National Forest
PO Box 2126
Oxford, Mississippi 38655
662-236-1456

RE: US Forest Service Southern Forest Resource Assessment (planning team
leaders: John Greis and David Wear)

Dear Mr. Greis and Mr. Wear,

Our organization, Citizens for Holly Springs National Forest, has reviewed the draft "Southern Forest Resource Assessment" (SFRA) and would like to share our concerns with you about several general problems that we found throughout the document. First, the SFRA finds that our southern forests are "sustainable". Unfortunately, the document focuses mainly on the sustainability of wood fiber supply rather than on economical, biological, and ecological sustainability. Furthermore, the conclusion about sustainability refers simply to one component (i.e., paper) of our dependence on wood. We urge you to reconsider 'sustainability' taking a much more inclusive view of what true economical and ecological sustainability would mean from a regional perspective. One particularly troubling oversight is the absence of information and consideration about the significant economic impact of current tourism or its potential from hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities associated with intact, native southern forests.

Our second concern is about the SFRA finding that through the year 2040 most pine monoculture "plantations" would be established on abandoned agricultural fields. That conclusion is at variance with data in the report itself which presents that 75% of recently established southern pine monocultures have been established at the expense of native southern forests. Certainly, one can make several trips around northern Mississippi and central Alabama to find that native forests are being clearcut THEN converted to pine monoculture. Why the discrepancy between the facts and the conclusion?

A third problem is in regard to the economic tradeoffs of a continuously expanding southern wood products industry. The SFRA concludes that the wood products industry as currently constructed is "sustainable" yet ignores information presented earlier in the document that supports an alternative view. That is the fact that communities in which value-added wood products industries are concentrated have more sustainability and more sound economic bases than do communities in which paper industries are based. (My family resides in Wilcox County, Alabama, where unemployment is one of the nation's highest and where a very large paper mill is currently destroying forests and streams in an ever-increasing area around the mill.) The SFRA seems to intentionally avoid important economic realities of small, medium, and large southern towns. Again we ask why is the word

"sustainable" used when clearly the wood products industry, particularly paper mills, cannot continue to destroy the natural beauty of the South and be viewed as "sustainable".

Our fourth concern is that the ecological implications of intensive pine monoculture management and increased logging and clearcutting are not addressed in the document. The report does not include ANY information about the inevitable and continuous decline in biodiversity, water quality, soil productivity, etc. Yet one in every four acres of southern forests are soon to be intensively managed in a monocultural manner. Gentlemen, there is simply no way to construct such an illogical conclusion without avoiding very germane pieces of information beyond those supporting the timber industry.

Finally, our last but not least concern is that the impacts of industrial forestry on the states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas are grossly understated. The SFRA reports that at least 250 million acres will be heavily logged by the timber industry and that 30 million acres of forest will be lost to sprawl. Furthermore, one in four acres of southern "forests" will be in a monocultural situation with virtually no biological diversity and heavy chemical dependence by 2040. Yet, the SFRA finds that s prawl is the biggest threat to native southern forests!!

In conclusion, as the SFRA report indicates, the most significant threat to the ecological integrity of southern forests is industrial forestry. The SFRA's incredulous avoidance of the overwhelmingly negative impacts of industrial forestry on our beautiful southern forests is an oversight that should be reconsidered.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

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