

# Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership

**A lasting voice for innovative management and investment in the public forests of  
North Carolina's mountains.**

November 5, 2015

The Honorable .....

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms./Mr. ....:

We, the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership, are a collaborative of over 50 organizations representing a diverse cross-section of public lands interests, including conservation and recreation, forest products, cultural heritage, wildlife, hunting and angling, cultural heritage and others. The Partnership is working collaboratively and in parallel to the US Forest Service planning process to develop a new forest management plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Our approach strives to reach community-supported, science-based methods for forest management, interpretation, and investment. Beyond the forest plan, we are committed to creating a lasting voice for innovative management and public investment in the public forests of North Carolina's mountains for the future.

We are very concerned about the efforts of some Western states to gain control of Federal public lands. We have also noted efforts by some Eastern state legislators to pass legislation in their state bodies supporting the turnover of federal public lands in the West to states. Our members and supporters not only hunt, fish and recreate on public lands in North Carolina, we travel for the same opportunities on public lands in the West. We contribute to the outdoor recreation economy nationwide. We do not wish to see a precedent set for transferring federal public lands to any other entity and limiting access to the places we hold dear.

In addition, if the amount of national public land is reduced, more pressure is placed on the remaining federal lands. The Blue Ridge Parkway is the top-most visited National Park unit and Great Smoky Mountains National Park is ranked third in visitation nationwide, with nearly 10 million visitors annually. National Forests in the Southern Region ran a close second to the Rocky Mountain region in visitation during 2008-2012 with 28.4 million visitors (National Visitor Use Monitoring Results, National Summary Report, 2013). Because of the close proximity of Pisgah National Forest to both the Parkway and GSMNP, visitation is already high.

Finally, should the transfer of federal lands to states occur, the door could be opened for a multitude of unsustainable land management practices including unrestricted timber harvest, fossil fuel extraction and mining. Decades of safeguards and practices that have evolved under dozens of Federal laws that

protect watersheds and guarantee a reliable, sustainable source of timber for the nation could be in jeopardy.

North Carolinians use public lands in both the East and West and know that they belong to all Americans. These lands help to grow America's economy by supporting an outdoor recreation industry that generates \$646 billion in economic benefit annually and support 6.1 million jobs. These lands also generate over \$39 billion in Federal tax revenue and another \$39+ billion in state tax revenue (Outdoor Recreation Economy, 2011).

On behalf of the undersigned groups and organizations, representing thousands of hunters, anglers, fish and wildlife professionals, conservationists, commercial outfitters and outdoor recreationists, we respectfully urge you to oppose efforts by states to acquire Federal public lands. This request excludes the normal processes of Federal land management agencies to sell low quality lands and purchase high quality habitat lands or in holdings to improve the quality of the lands they manage.

Sincerely yours,

Leadership Team, Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership

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Members of the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership:

Access Fund  
American Whitewater  
Back Country Horsemen of America & NC  
Carolina Mountain Club  
High Country Hikers  
Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition  
International Mountain Bicycling Association  
Mountain True  
NC Youth Camp Association  
Root Cause  
Southern Appalachian Mineral Society  
Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards

Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association  
Special Permit Holders  
Sustainable Foothills  
The Wilderness Society  
Wild South  
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy  
Ecological Services & Markets  
NC Wildlife Federation  
Sierra Club  
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy  
Southern Environmental Law Center

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