



North Carolina Native Plant Society

Promoting the enjoyment and conservation of North Carolina's native plants and their habitats through education, protection, propagation, and advocacy since 1951

March 24, 2006

Dear (Legislator)

The North Carolina Native Plant Society is opposed to the proposed sale of US National Forest Service Lands to fund rural schools, relief for Hurricane Katrina victims and for other purposes (1). Selling our national assets that cannot be replaced to pay for current expenditures is shortsighted.

In North Carolina, the Forest Service proposed selling 9,828 acres. In North Carolina that breaks down to 3,835 acres in the Nantahala National Forest; 2,780 acres in the Pisgah National Forest; 2,317 in the Uwharrie National Forest; and 895 acres in the Croatan National Forest, the Southern Environmental Law Center in Chapel Hill said. Land parcels range in size from less than an acre to 561 acres (2).

“The National Forest should be trying to fill in the gaps between its isolated parcels and main woodlands rather than divest itself of detached tracts”, Jim Stephenson, policy analyst for the North Carolina Coastal Federation, said. “It’s a backwards approach to building a national forest,” he continued (3). It is our opinion that the government should be acquiring properties to fill in gaps between tracts instead of selling off isolated tracts.

At a time when development is taking so much of our land, we need to conserve more, not sell what is already protected. We believe that rural schools must be funded, but from a different source. Loss of habitat is a major problem for our native plants and our native wildlife.

“One of them has an endangered species on it, so of course we’re concerned about that,” said Croatan District Ranger Lauren Hillman about one of the parcels to be sold (3). We must be very careful not to eradicate species that are already pushed to the brink of extinction.

I am writing on behalf of North Carolina Native Plant Society, a non-profit organization committed to the conservation and protection of native plant communities and education about them.

Yours,

Alice Zawadski
President, North Carolina Native Plant Society
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References:

1. Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 referencing the Forest Services Pilot Program, Sec. 329, Dept. of Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002, proposed H.R. 3855 and President Bush’s proposed budget for 2006
2. “For sale: National forest land -Bush administration proposes selling tracts in N.C., 33 other states” by Doug Abrahms, published February 12, 2006, Citizens-Times, Asheville, NC.
3. The Daily News, Jacksonville, N.C., “For Sale by Owner: National Forest,” Patrica Smith, published February 26, 2006.