



August 14, 2020

Lee Ranger District  
Sandy Ridge - Scoping Comments  
95 Railroad Avenue  
Edinburg, VA 22824-9656

RE: Sandy Ridge Yellow Pine Enhancement Project

Dear USDA Forest Service, Lee Ranger District:

On behalf of the National Deer Alliance (NDA) and the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), I am writing to state our support for the proposed project to enhance communities of yellow pine species and improve wildlife habitat in the Sandy Ridge area of Hardy County, West Virginia. We are national non-profit conservation organizations with missions to serve as the guardian of wild deer conservation, wild deer habitat and our hunting heritage. One of our primary focus areas is wildlife habitat and habitat management.

We applaud the Lee Ranger District's leadership and proactive approach to managing the Sandy Ridge area of the National Forest System (NSF) in a manner consistent with the goals and objectives described in the *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan George Washington National Forest* (Forest Plan). NDA and QDMA fully support the Forest Service's proposal to increase the resilience and proper function of ecological systems through the promotion of successional stages and open canopy conditions, species composition, fire regimes, soil and water conservation, and sustainable recreation. Through our extensive work on deer and habitat management across North America, we know that the actions proposed by the Lee Ranger District will benefit wild deer by enhancing the varying habitat requirements, critical habitat components and ecosystem preferences of the region's fauna.

The Sandy Ridge area's white-tailed deer require varying habitat types and structures, and the proposal's inclusion of wildlife habitat enhancement measures such as enhancing existing wildlife openings to improve open and brushy habitat, creating feathered edges around openings to create transitions between open and forested habitats, and the creation of ponds and vernal pools will create these necessary habitat variations. We applaud the Lee Ranger District's diligent and thoughtful work in drafting a proposal that greatly improves wildlife habitat in the Sandy Ridge area. Further, we support the Lee Ranger District's inclusion of hunters and other stakeholders in the forest management process.

Sincerely,

Nick Pinizzotto  
President and CEO