



October 8, 2020

James River & Warm Springs Ranger District
422 Forestry Road
Hot Springs, VA 24445

RE: Potts Creek Vegetation Management Project

Dear USDA Forest Service, James River & Warm Springs 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 create early successional and late open canopy conditions to provide a diversity of age classes for wildlife species in the Potts Creek area covering approximately 38,544 acres of the George Washington National Forest in Alleghany County, 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 James River & Warm Springs Ranger District's leadership and proactive approach to managing the Potts Creek 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 create early successional and late open canopy conditions to provide diverse habitats for wildlife through timber harvest, timber stand improvement, prescribed fire and creation of open and edge habitat. Through our extensive work on deer and habitat management across North America, we know that the actions proposed by the District will benefit wild deer by enhancing the varying habitat requirements, critical habitat components and ecosystem preferences of the region's fauna.

The Potts Creek area's white-tailed deer require varying habitat types and structures, and the proposal's inclusion of wildlife habitat enhancement measures such as encouraging regeneration of forests, managing non-native species and the planting of both soft and hard mast trees will create these necessary habitat variations. We applaud the James River & Warm Springs Ranger District's diligent and thoughtful work in drafting a proposal that greatly improves wildlife habitat in the Potts Creek area. Further, we support the James River & Warm Springs Ranger District's inclusion of hunters and other stakeholders in the forest management process.

Sincerely,

Nick Pinizzotto
President and CEO