



October 15, 2020

George Washington and Jefferson National Forests
Attn: Beth LeMaster
5162 Valleypointe Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019

RE: George Washington and Jefferson National Forests Oak and Woodland Restoration Project

Dear USDA Forest Service, George Washington and Jefferson National Forests:

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 focused on the management of white pine stands across the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (GWJNF) to increase desired mast producing hardwood species or native yellow pine. 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 Forest Service's leadership and proactive approach to managing the GWJNF in a manner consistent with the goals and objectives described in the *George Washington Forest Plan* and the *Jefferson Forest Plan*. NDA and QDMA fully support the Forest Service's proposal to improve structural diversity, promote tree species diversity and hard mast production, and increase light levels reaching lower levels of the stand which provides for hiding/nest cover, higher abundance and diversity of invertebrates, and increase soft mast and herbaceous forage. Through our extensive work on deer and habitat management across North America, we know that the actions proposed by the Forest Service will benefit wild deer by enhancing the varying habitat requirements, critical habitat components and ecosystem preferences of the region's fauna.

The GWJNF'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 Forest Service's diligent and thoughtful work in drafting a proposal that greatly improves wildlife habitat in the GWJNF. Further, we support the Forest Service's inclusion of hunters and other stakeholders in the forest management process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Pinizzotto".

Nick Pinizzotto
President and CEO