



RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY

Nick Biemiller

Forest Conservation Director

Southern Appalachian Region

nickb@ruffedgrousesociety.org

Mobile: 412-719-0625

Joby Timm

Forest Supervisor

George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

5162 Valleypointe Parkway

Roanoke, VA 24019

540-265-5139

Dear Mr. Timm,

On behalf of the Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society (RGS & AWS) and our members, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *2021 Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Project #59509*.

Established in 1961, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to creating healthy forests, abundant wildlife and promoting a conservation ethic. Together with the American Woodcock Society (AWS), established in 2014, RGS & AWS works with landowners and government agencies to develop critical wildlife habitat utilizing scientific management practices.

Nonnative invasive plants, pests, and pathogens are existential threats to sustainable forestry, as they can degrade forest stands, outcompete native tree species, and decrease biodiversity. Gypsy moth poses significant threats to forest ecosystem health in the Southern Appalachians, as it can decrease tree growth, cause branch dieback, and tree mortality when populations outbreak, posing significant challenges to forest managers and disrupting silvicultural planning efforts. RGS & AWS recognizes the success of the Slow the Spread of Gypsy Moth program to reduce the spread of the exotic gypsy moth.

RGS & AWS support this project and believe that controlling invasive exotic plants, pests, and pathogens is vital to support healthy forest ecosystems and the wildlife that inhabit them. Helping the Forest Service to increase the pace and scale of active forest management on National Forests to benefit healthy forests and abundant wildlife is a national priority for our organization. To effectively achieve forest resource objectives while increasing the pace and scale, it is vital that threats to forest health are mitigated.

RGS & AWS commend the Forest Service on their efforts to develop this project. We are excited about seeing this project move forward and thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Nick Biemiller, Forest Conservation Director

Southern Appalachian Region

Ruffed Grouse Society

American Woodcock Society

451 McCormick Road

Coraopolis, PA 15108

412-262-4044

Toll Free 888-564-6747

Fax 412-262-9207

RuffedGrouseSociety.org