

July 27, 2021

District Ranger,  
Cheat-Potomac Ranger District,  
2499 North Fork Highway,  
Petersburg, WV 26847

Subject: Upper Cheat River Project - Scoping

Dear Mr. Morgan,

I am Robert C. Burns, Ph.D., Director of the WVU School of Forestry and Natural Resources. I support the comments made by the West Virginia Forestry Association regarding the need to increase the annual harvest plan on the Monongahela NF (MNF). We are pleased that the MNF is seeking to develop a long-term plan Order of Entry Strategy, including a 10-year scheduling of proposed actions. At WVU our desire is to see a forest plan that realistically meets the desired harvest goals of the forest, with West Virginia foresters in mind. I would like to make the following points:

- The proposed plan will allow for less administrative burden by the MNF, yet still allows for consultation with other agencies to ensure full compliance with regulatory requirements.
- The detailed assessment of the forest condition is a critical piece of the process, and we are encouraged to see this.
- We are encouraged to see the desire to work with local private contractors to harvest timber. The MNF is an extremely important driver of the economy in West Virginia, and contracting locally is the hallmark of being a good neighbor.
- We are aware that the forest is quite mature, much like many forests within the state of West Virginia, including our own WVU University Research Forest. As such, sustained harvesting should be increased at a rate established by your professional foresters.
- We share the concerns of the West Virginia Forestry Association that too much of the harvest is projected (over half) to be accomplished via helicopter method. Helicopter logging is not cost efficient and does little to support local, small forestry outfits.
- We recommend the use of conventional logging methods that will allow for future trails, fire breaks and access for many other purposes, rather than high-cost cabling systems.
- Finally, we at the WVU School of Forestry and Natural Resources remain committed to being a good partner throughout the upcoming 10-year period and beyond. We are interested in opening further communication, which will be a two-way beneficial relationship.

Thank you and best regards,

Sincerely,



Dr. Robert C. Burns, Ph.D.  
Director and Professor  
West Virginia University  
School of Forestry and Natural Resources