

From: [Hampton Barns](#)
To: [FS-comments-southern-chokeee-watauga](#)
Subject: [External Email]Pond Mountain Project CNF
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Hello,

I would like to comment on the proposed Pond Mountain Project in Carter County, TN.

I am generally in favor of the project's scope and goals. Particularly the introduction of blight resistant American Chestnut seedlings to the project area.

There are, however 3 aspects of the project that I have concerns about.

One is the widespread use of herbicides (Imazapyr and Glyphosate) to inhibit less desirable species of red maple, white pine and rhododendron. While I understand the philosophy behind this prescription, I am concerned about the potential for overuse of these herbicides and the impacts to water quality as well as any additional unintended consequences. I would therefore urge caution and judicious use of these substances on the project.

My second concern is the decommissioning of roads and user created trails within the project area. Despite the impacts that these routes create, they also provide access to public land that would otherwise be curtailed by their removal. The presence of these travel ways is, in itself, indicative of the need of the public to access areas of the Forest, otherwise inconvenient to access by any other route. The public would be better served by limiting illegal, motorized use, thereby mitigating erosion and water quality issues, while enhancing recreational pedestrian/equestrian access along these long-established routes; Specifically road 50A which connects FR 50 with FR 293 via Cherry Flats Ridge. I agree that the road was poorly sited through a sensitive riparian area when it was initially constructed, but its there now and creates a valuable link between these two travel ways that the nearby hiking trail does not provide. It would not be difficult to mitigate the issues presented by leaving this route in place while providing the benefit of continued public access.

My third and last concern is with the road thinning for the purpose of "...increasing sunlight to the roads and reducing the drying time of water on the road surfaces, this [sic] reducing road maintenance needs and costs." While I am generally in favor of thinning the edges of the roads, I would hope that Forest management would then, increase public access to these roads by keeping them open more throughout the year. According to the National Forest Seasonal Management Schedule, "Certain roads in the Cherokee National Forest are systematically closed to motorized vehicle use to...reduce road maintenance costs." While there are other considerations that factor into these decisions, I would expect that ..."reducing road maintenance needs and costs..." would translate into the ability to allow the roads that have undergone thinning to be open longer and more often to provide access for those members of the public who are elderly or disabled and cannot, therefore, hike to the more remote destinations served by these roads. This is especially true during winter when the roads are closed, but the physical fitness and mental health benefits of recreation on public land are still essential to public welfare. Much of the time,

these seasonal closures are in place during lengthy periods of warm, dry weather, so roadside thinning should be a precursor to allowing these roads to stay open longer and reopen sooner each year.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Cramer

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Benjamin Cramer.