



⊠ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ⊠

Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dave Casey
Pisgah District Ranger

FROM: Andrea Leslie, NC Wildlife Resources Commission *Andrea Leslie*
Habitat Conservation Program

DATE: June 2, 2023

SUBJECT: NCWRC comments on the Catheys Creek Watershed Restoration Project

Biologists with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) reviewed the US Forest Service's (USFS) Scoping documents for the Catheys Creek Watershed Restoration Project, which proposes streambank stabilization, aquatic organism passage restoration, road maintenance, and non-native invasive species (NNIS) treatment in the Catheys Creek watershed in the Pisgah National Forest in Transylvania County. Comments from the NCWRC are offered for your consideration under provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and the North Carolina Environmental Policy Act (G.S. 113A-1 et seq., as amended; 1 NCAC-25).

The project's main focus is to improve water quality in the Catheys Creek watershed. NCWRC is supportive of the project, as it should address multiple sediment sources, restore aquatic organism passage, and improve aquatic habitat in the watershed. Proposed project elements include the following:

- Charles Creek watershed: road decommissioning, culvert removal, aquatic organism passage restoration, and conversion of a culvert to a ford crossing.
- Negro Prong: conversion of culvert to ford crossings at numerous locations.
- Catheys Creek mainstem: bank stabilization at numerous locations.
- Kuykendall Creek: bank stabilization at numerous locations, conversion of culvert to ford crossings at numerous locations, and NNIS treatment.

Brook Trout are found in the upper Catheys Creek watershed, including in Negro Prong and Charles Creek. In addition, Vermont Saltfly (*Rasvena terna*, NC Significantly Rare) is found in Negro Prong. Eastern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*, US Federal Species of Concern, NC Special Concern) is found in Catheys Creek downstream of the proposed work.

This work should benefit habitat for these species, and it is especially important to use excellent erosion and sediment control on these projects.

We request that the USFS coordinate with NCWRC fisheries biologists on proposed locations for aquatic organism passage restoration and with NCWRC gameland management staff on proposed locations of road closures and crossing obliterations.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this project. We greatly appreciate the USFS' efforts to improve aquatic habitats in the district. Please feel free to contact me at (828) 400-4223 if you have any questions about these comments.

ec: Ryan Jacobs, Wes Humphries, Mike Parks, Jake Rash, David Stewart, Powell Wheeler,
Lori Williams, NCWRC