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BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) is writing to provide scoping feedback for the Ruffed Grouse Habitat Enhancement Project. BRC is a national non-profit organization that champions responsible recreation and encourages a strong conservation ethic and individual stewardship. We champion responsible use of public lands and waters for the benefit of all recreationists by educating and empowering our members to secure, protect, and expand shared outdoor recreation access and use by working collaboratively with natural resource managers and other recreationists. Our members use motorized and non-motorized means of recreation, including OHVs, horses, mountain bikes, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout the United States, including those of the Forest Service. Many of our members and supporters live in Kentucky or travel across the country to visit Kentucky and use motorized vehicles to access USFS managed lands throughout Kentucky. BRC members visit the area for motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, rockhounding, hunting, wildlife and nature study, camping, observing cultural resources, and other similar pursuits. BRC members and supporters have concrete, definite, and immediate plans to continue such activities in the future.

Wildfire

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The largest threat to these species is wildfire. Healthy forests are critical to the vitality of the fisher species. BRC believes beneficial forest management practices need to be used with the forests. Vegetation projects will help aid in these goals. One wildfire could cause the entire species to go extinct. We support the Forest Service in properly managing the forests to prevent wildfires that could cause harm to the species. However, many conservation groups actively litigate forest projects that help mitigate wildfire risk. These same conservation groups are the ones who want to designate critical habitat. One of the best things that can be done to protect this species and prevent extinction is to actively manage forests to prevent wildfires.

Many fires have occurred recently. These fires are results of years of hands off management and land agencies need to take a more proactive approach to forest fire management. The plan states a possible method to use is prescribed burns. If this method is chosen for an area, and a wildfire arises at any point, that wildfire should be treated as such and the Forest Service should not allow the wildfire to burn in order to meet prescribed burn objectives. This involves a lot of risks and wildfires should always be treated with as much urgency to suppress the fire as possible.

Conclusion

We would like to close by saying we support “shared use”. As long as overall visitation numbers are appropriate for the affected resources, motorized and non-motorized users can be compatible with one another so long as individual users understand designations and plan their activities accordingly. Indeed, motorized and nonmotorized recreation use often overlap as OHV’s often increase accessibility to non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking, camping, equestrian use, etc. We also hold that responsible recreational use of public lands can exist in harmony with ecosystem needs.

BRC would like to be considered an interested public for this project. Information can be sent to the following address and email address:

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Sincerely,

Sharetrails.org – it’s what we do!

A stylized handwritten signature consisting of the letters 'B' and 'B' followed by a long horizontal line.

Ben Burr
Executive Director
BlueRibbon Coalition

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Simone Griffin'.

Simone Griffin
Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition