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## **Questions**

Our home is surrounded on three sides by areas identified for burn. How close to our house would a potential burn occur and how will you manage to keep it away from us? What happens if you damage our property?

We have a 12' dug well at the base of the hill that provides great water. What consideration will be made to protect it and the aquifer during burns and if herbicides are used?

Our house was previously associated with 1,000 acres of land that were cleared for agriculture and then sold to the USFS in the 1930s.

Given that the USFS inherited a landscape that was cleared and previously used for agriculture, likely in all of these management units but I know for sure in the Oxbow area, how can you be certain about the 'natural' community types that were here before the land was cleared or what a natural burn cycle would be?

I have also noticed a sharp increase in natural openings from wind throw which would seem to create similar open canopy conditions to those you describe as desired. Would you speak to how these natural openings might provide similar opportunities for regeneration?

## **Observations**

- **Plastic**

Markings/plastic flagging is typically left in large amounts after surveyors and researchers come through (often in addition to fresh and bright paint) creating the potential for micro plastics being dispersed throughout the forested ecosystems which is ugly and bad for wildlife. Additionally, after the last management activities (timber harvest) on these public lands hundreds of plastic tree protectors were left behind. A few of us have been slowly collecting them and sometimes carrying them out as they have fallen to the ground and are not degrading as was the intent. There are still many of these throughout the Oxbow area. Will you be sending crews in to remove these as well as garbage, much of it plastic, left behind by campers that is dispersed throughout the forest prior to any burning that happens?

- **Local wild plants and animals**

I have lived at the base of the Oxbow area for 25 years and have been walking and observing the area multiple times a week over that time. I have observed that wild plant and animal diversity has increased, in particular some of the species that you seem to be managing for (though I don't find clarity in the written documents on what those species are.) Additionally, I have observed the importance of the Middlebury River Corridor for providing exceptional

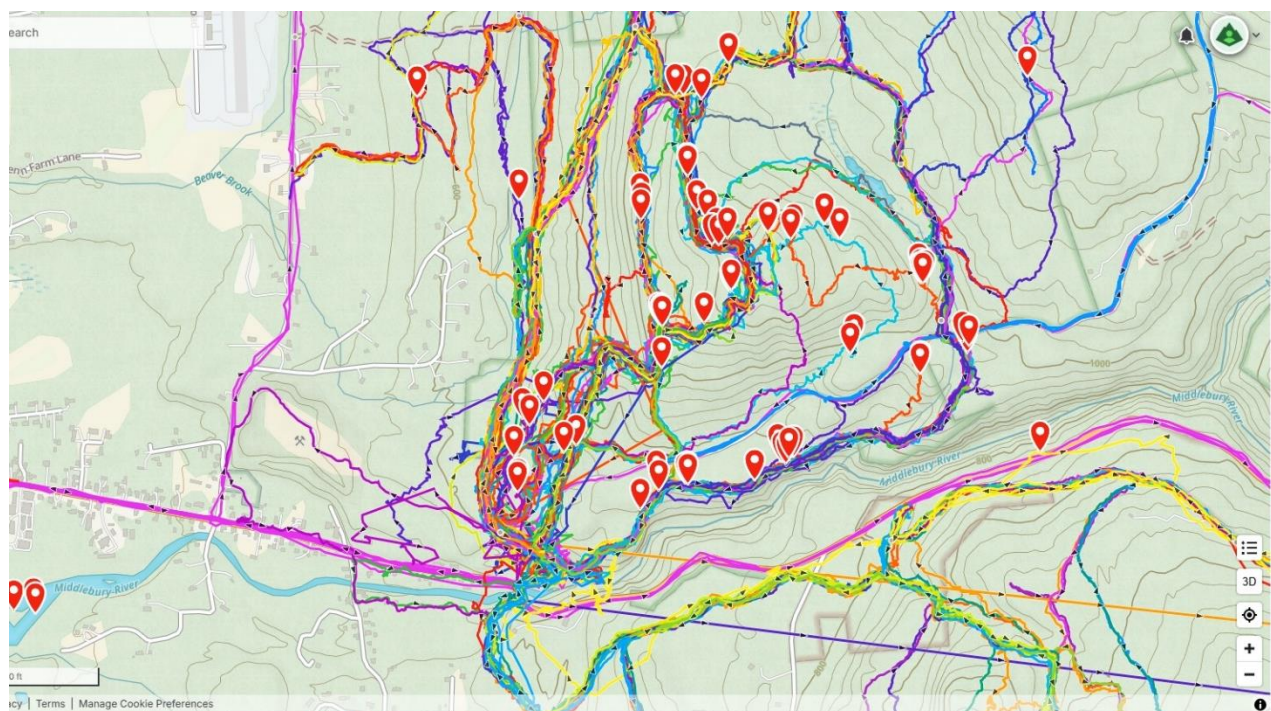
wildlife habitat and a well-used travel corridor along the Middlebury River Gorge for a surprising number of species. I have started documenting, with a wildlife camera, activity along the corridor as I have found evidence of a threatened species and am hoping to get a good photograph for final proof.

Plants that I have observed increasing over the past 25 years:

Pink lady slippers – in one area I have documented them starting from a cluster of four to a community of approximately 40. These are spreading into other clusters on the south facing aspects of the Oxbow escarpment north of the North Branch Road.

Blue berry and Huckleberry have spread in the area as well as

I have a lot of data and photos of the spreading wild azalea, as well as observations and photos of the spread of the pink ladyslippers and a few observations of Canada day lily which seem to be spreading on the hillside. Additionally, I have information on a potential threatened wildlife species. Given the short notice for public comment on this project, I submit below maps of the data I've been collecting and an offer/request to walk the area with USFS staff this spring to discuss the project.



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