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First name: Dylan

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Mr. John Morgan, District Ranger

Cheat Potomac Ranger District

2499 North Fork Highway

Petersburg, WV 26847

Subject: Upper Cheat River Project

Dear Mr. Morgan:

As someone who has grown up hunting and fishing here in WV and within the forestry profession, I have both positive and negative comments about the USFS plan for Upper Cheat River Project Area. I am certainly happy to hear that there is an increased emphasis in Timber Harvesting within the area to diversify the wildlife habitat and to bring the forest into balance with respect to the age class distribution across the project area. In my opinion this could be very beneficial to the current wildlife living in this region as beneficial to the local communities.

Sadly, the scope of the annual harvest (roughly 1% per year) will fall greatly short of the goal to change the overall structure of the stand. The harvest methods being primarily helicopter (51%) and cable yarding (15%) will provide very little or no financial benefit to the local companies due to the cost of these operations, and there is very few local helicopter and cable yarding companies to do the work. As far as I know there is only 1 cable yarder operator in the state and the company is not based in that region. Both operations are more costly than conventional logging, which will reduce revenue to the USFS and local communities. All WV loggers are held to the BMP's and Sedimentation Control Act and have proven over the years that environmental quality and sustainable practices can be and are achieved through conventional logging.

In the end there is no denying that the forest is way behind its management and allowable sale quality goals. The increase in harvesting would be very beneficial to this area and would be even more beneficial if done in not so small increments as proposed. Lastly, it would be best to get rid of the very costly and ineffective helicopter and cable yarding methods in favor of proven ground based conventional harvest which is proven to protect land and provide valuable jobs of revenue to the local communities.

Thank you,

Dylan M. Fitzgerald

Forest Technician