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First name: Torin

Last name: Miller

Organization: National Deer Association

Title:

Comments: 12 August, 2021 Forest Supervisor's Office 1755 Cleveland Highway Gainesville, GA 30501 RE: Comments Regarding the Foothills Landscape Project Dear USDA Forest Service, Chattahoochee and Oconee and National Forests: On behalf of the National Deer Association (NDA), I am writing to state our support for the proposed project focused on maintaining or restoring biologic integrity, connectivity, resilience, and soil and water quality on the 157,625 acres of the Foothills Landscape. We are national non-profit conservation organization with missions to serve as the guardian of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. We represent 30,000 members nationwide, and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals. The Foothills Landscape Project (FLP) is designed to maintain and improve watershed and ecological conditions by addressing the need to improve biologic integrity, increase the ecosystem's resilience to disturbance, restore connectivity, and support high water quality and soil productivity. Specifically, the Forest Service is seeking to enhance and provide quality habitat for rare and declining species, as well as desired game and non-game species; to reduce hazardous fuel loading across the landscape to diminish damaging wildfires; to improve soil and water quality; to provide sustainable recreation and access opportunities; and to awaken and strengthen a connection to these lands for all people. The NDA is dedicated to ensuring the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. The Forest Service Foothills Landscape Project advances the future of all three by enhancing and providing quality habitat for game and non-game species, reducing wildfire fuel across the landscape and increasing access opportunities to connect all types of people to the land. Through our extensive work on deer and habitat management across North America, we know that the actions proposed by the Forest Service will benefit wild deer by enhancing the varying habitat requirements, critical habitat components and ecosystem preferences of the region's fauna. The region's white-tailed deer require varying habitat types and structures, and the proposal's inclusion of wildlife habitat enhancement measures such as encouraging successional diversity, managing non-native species and expanding the ecological role of fire will create these necessary habitat variations. We applaud the Forest Service's diligent and thoughtful work in drafting a proposal that greatly improves wildlife habitat in the Foothills Landscape. Further, we support the Forest Service's inclusion of hunters and other stakeholders in the forest management process. Sincerely, Torin Miller Director of Policy

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