

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/14/2022 5:00:00 AM
First name: David
Last name: Whitmire
Organization: Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council
Title: Chairman
Comments: To District Ranger Gaston:

On behalf of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council, thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Crossover project for the Nantahala National Forest.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Council (FWCC) was formed in the early 1990's to establish a voice for sportsmen and women across Western North Carolina (WNC) on wildlife and wildlife habitat issues on the public lands we live around. Most recently a substantial portion of our work is on the Nantahala / Pisgah National Forest Revision Plan that is in its final stages. While we are committed to the many facets of needed work for wildlife habitat through WNC, our biggest asset is connecting the local sportsmen and women to their resource managers and vice versa.

We have followed the Crossover project from the beginning. Our council often uses our Federal and State Resource managers as technical advisers and has been the case for this project. We appreciate the time and hard work that has gone into this project. We feel it is the right direction, at the right time for wildlife habitat. It is with this history and knowledge that we submit these comments.

FWCC fully supports Alternative B. In supporting Alternative B, we must note that the area needs more regeneration for future mast production and early successional habitat. Peak mast production in oaks occurs between age 40-80 years old. The analysis area currently has only about 15% of the area in the 40-80-year-old age classes. In addition, there is only approximately 10% in age classes 1-40. Alternative B proposes a mere 7-8% of the area to be regenerated.

FWCC would also like to encourage that existing roads, (50ft each side) and wildlife openings, (100ft around edges) be thinned and daylighted to provide benefits for wildlife and future prescribed burns.

FWCC strongly supports Alternative B and hopes you will consider not only our request to go further for wildlife but also some of our partner's request. We endorse both the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commissions and the Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Societies comments concerning the Crossover project. For future projects we would like to see more regeneration in relation to the size of the area being considered when existing regeneration is lacking.

Sincerely,

David Whitmire

FWCC Chair