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Organization: Natural Heritage Program

Title: Ecologist

Comments: November 28, 2023

Susan Miller, Uwharrie District Ranger

789 Biscoe Road

Troy, NC 27371

Subject: Lomax Project scoping

Dear Ms. Miller:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. The project involves extensive potential vegetation management as well as recreational developments. For most of the units, we have limited information and do not have particular concerns. Our primary concern is with the block just south of Lomax Church. This is the area we recognize as the Lomax Church Longleaf Pine Forest natural area, one of the most significant Piedmont longleaf pine forest sites left in North Carolina and one which receives our highest rating for site significance (R1 - Exceptional). This entire area is included in the proposed treatment units. As with all other remaining Uwharrie longleaf pine sites, it has a history of cutting and fire suppression, but it retains more of its natural character than most. Thanks to recent Forest Service prescribed burning and restoration cutting, it has developed toward more natural condition. Parts may benefit from further silviculture, but we believe that other parts would be best served by allowing them to continue developing with fire alone. Because of the complex conditions here, we request to meet in the field with Forest Service staff to discuss the needs of individual stands.

Smaller treatment areas are proposed in the Rocky Creek Longleaf Pine Forest and Bogs, Sand Branch, and Spencer Creek Hillside Seepage Bog natural areas. Some of the treatments may serve to promote more natural conditions, but others may detract from it. Again, we believe a field meeting is the best way to address comments on these areas.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Schafale

Natural Heritage Program