

June 11, 2018

USDA Forest Service

ATTN: Brett Hillman

2538 Depot Street

Manchester Center, VT 05255

**RE: Comments on the Early Successional Habitat Creation (ESHC) Project**

Vermont Traditions Coalition (VTC) is a statewide coalition of approximately 24 organizations together with a broad variety of partner organizations that share our mission, work with the coalition, and financially support the coalition. VTC is comprised of the traditional rural communities of sportsmen, snowmobilers, the forest products community, the agriculture community, outdoor guides, and lake Associations. VTC’s mission is to preserve and protect these hallmarks of rural Vermont and closely related activities on a statewide basis.

VTC appreciates the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) staff for inviting public comment on this important project. We also want to recognize and express our thanks for entertaining a partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) to enhance wildlife habitat on federal forestland in Southern Vermont. VTC has supported and recognized past projects in which RGS partnered with the State of Vermont in its wildlife management areas and state forests. These habitat projects have provided great economic and ecological benefits to the people of the region.

VTC supports the Early Successional Habitat Creation Project (ESHC). The RGS is an excellent partner for this project. VTC has been a strong supporter of RGS and their focus on habitat work for their signature birds, ruffed grouse and woodcock. We recognize that the creation of early successional habitat benefits a very wide range of wildlife species. VTC also recognizes the economic benefits of this project for local jobs and vibrant rural communities. ESHC will also serve to greatly enhance outdoor recreational opportunities, especially wildlife-dependent forms of recreation.

From a planning aspect to manage forests sustainably for long-term economic and ecological benefits, it is very important that a sufficient percentage of the land, in acres, are in the 0-9-year-old age class. This project is a big step in that direction. VTC believes this project complies with Forest Plan direction including forest-wide and management area standards and guidelines and there is no significant impact on the environment.

Please accept our comments and approve this project and implement it at your earliest opportunity.

Again, thank you for the opportunity presented.

Sincerely,

Ed Larson

Executive Director

Vermont Traditions Coalition

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