

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/10/2020 9:00:26 PM

First name: Alex

Last name: Harvey

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hemlock Restoration

The effect of HWA infestation along the Chattooga River has been devastating. It is encouraging that there are still remain stands of hemlocks, that, while visibly stressed, are healthy enough to respond to chemical and biological methods of restoration. To make sure hemlock restoration in the Foothills area remains on track, the following is suggested. 1. Expand HCAs to include any remaining healthy stands of hemlocks in the Chattooga Riparian Corridor. 2. Grant permission of soil-injection imidacloprid treatment of hemlocks which line the river, using guidelines developed for treatment of hemlocks in other riparian corridors (see below). 3. Follow the model of hemlock restoration in the Green River Game Lands in North Carolina. In the last 3 years, from a partnership of the Hemlock Restoration Initiative, NCWRC, American Whitewater and Mountain True, over 2000 hemlocks have been chemically treated along the riparian corridor of the Green River. Materials and chemicals were provided by funding from the state and grants. Treatments were implemented by volunteer whitewater paddlers trained in the treatment protocols. The equipment and chemicals were transported by boat to remote areas that could not be reached by trails or land vehicles. To date 179 volunteers have contributed to the effort. A similar effort on the Chattooga river could lead to preservation of many of the remaining hemlock stands that line the river.

Better communication and the public as stewards of the forest

Going forward better documentation and communication with the public could lead to more effective execution of projects. Some suggestions for general projects with the goal of promoting visibility, public involvement and stewardship: 1. As specific projects arise, have available download-able, georeferenced maps of the project area along with a brief description of the scope of that project. 2. Allow the public to contribute to documentation of the project before, during and afterward. 3. Allow non-USFS entities, such as the Chattooga Conservancy or Georgia Forest Watch, to scope out the area, prior to work, for areas of biological interest that could to be preserved, for instance bogs and old growth forest. 4. For each project, have a contact in the USFS that can immediately place a temporary hold on work, in situations where there is clear evidence that the work plan for that site is not being followed or other concerns have been raised by the public. Have a mechanism in place that allows the USFS and public come quickly to a consensus as to how to allow for the work to continue.