

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/12/2021 5:59:11 PM

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Comments: Dear Forest Service Stewards,

Thank you for inviting comment on the forest plan. I'm a long- time forest enthusiast and advocate. Studying Geography, while specializing in climate and tree rings, helped cultivate my perspective on forest dynamics. My background includes helping improve soil and water conservation for both the State of Arkansas and the USDA NRCS. I helped finalize the guidelines and regulations used to certify sustainable forestry practices in the Ozarks. In addition, I've been a teacher/naturalist with the Ozark Natural Science Center, and interpreter for AR State Parks. Being a stakeholder since 1977, I do not take the responsibility of providing comments lightly.

When Climate Change is incorporated into forest planning, air and water quality become more important than timber production. This recent forest plan makes projections about what the public will want and how the USFS envisions the forest. In my vision, the forest is biologically diverse with deep productive soil, a healthy soil microbiology and abundant indigenous wildlife habitat.

It's a misguided belief that fire, blazing across the forest floor, greatly increases forest stability in the Ozark Mountains. Much of the justification of frequent fire in the Ozarks is based on Richard Guyette's research in fire prone areas of the Missouri Ozarks. However, these research sites were disproportionately impacted by lightning generated wildfire, due to extreme exposures. Most of the Ozark mountains are relatively free of historically frequent fires. Responsible low impact ground fires in the Ozark Forests temporarily exposes the ground, but the canopy quickly closes and the understory is filled with brush and herbaceous species. Successful oak sprouts must compete with this fire induced flush of growth before becoming part of the canopy.

I suggest the USFS significantly reduce their use of controlled burning. Single tree and small group thinning will provide the needed light at the forest floor to allow for adequate oak tree germination and survival. Pioneer Forest in Salem Mo. is an active example of how light management (by culling poor quality trees) can allow natural oak regeneration to revitalize the Ozark forests. The LAD Foundation has been producing higher quality oak timber (while maintaining oak regeneration) continuously for the last 57 years without the use of fire!
<https://ladfoundation.org/>

Off Road Vehicles destroy ground cover and vegetation, causing disproportionate amounts of soil erosion (considering the number of citizens served by OHV recreation). The Ozark National Forest is an incredible and irreplaceable resource that must not be squandered trying to fill a perceived need that may or may not exist in the future.

Oil and Gas production should not be a priority on U. S. Forest Service land. Global climate change will force us all, sooner or later, to convert to alternative energy. Why not adopt a low carbon footprint and make the USFS a leader in selling carbon credits?

My vision of the USFS in the 21st century and beyond, embraces the problem of climate change and recognizes the important role our National Forests could play reducing atmospheric Co2. I propose that in the Ozark's, forest resources could be best utilized by selling carbon sequestering Co2 credits, while improving soil and water quality. Deep hardwood forests dominate the headwaters of the Buffalo, Piney, Kings, and White Rivers, and are ideal places to sequester carbon in both the trees and soils. With a focus on selling carbon credits, the USFS could generate income and preserve the forest at the same time.

Please communicate with Arkansas Representative Bruce Westerman to understand H.R.5859, the Trillion Tree Act. Its implementation will lead to the sequestration of greenhouse gases and shows the feasibility of selling carbon credits to generate Forest Service income. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5859/text?format=txt>

Soil erosion lowers water quality. Northwest Arkansas continues to lead growth in Arkansas. Most NWA residents get drinking water from Beaver Lake. The ONF is the largest landholder within the watershed of Beaver Lake. I urge you to embrace the realization that clean water, a resilient ecosystem, and pure air will become the golden egg of publicly owned land. By maintaining an inherently dynamic forest canopy, the stable

duff layer of undisturbed leaves and detritus reduces soil loss rates to near zero, while realizing increases in both soil depth and fertility.

<https://www.beaverwatershedalliance.org/>

Air quality is a serious concern when the forest is intentionally burned, and not only when the wind changes direction and threatens to drift into urban areas. What about all the animals and birds negatively impacted by poor air quality and habitat destruction from controlled burns?

Species extinctions, many due to global climate change, have reached unprecedented levels in modern times. The Ozark National Forest represents some of the best large blocks of relatively undisturbed wilderness, so critical for survival of numerous endangered plant and animal species. Please leave the forest largely intact, with less disruption and more conservation. I ask everyone to expand their expertise. Examine your inspirations, and see if you (as a group) can develop the vision, and resolve to make changes that improve forest conditions for our citizens, wildlife, and naturally the trees.

Thank you for your time and consideration.