

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/11/2023 2:49:50 AM

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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

My question is about potential liability of the US Forest Service, an issue that directly impacts me as a taxpayer. I read that both the agency and numerous special interest groups embrace timber harvesting to maintain young forest conditions and the wildlife supported within those conditions. I don't have anything against hunting or bird-watching or areas of young forest, but I have to ask about the impact of more deer. Herds of deer are my concern because of their association with ticks (Lyme disease) and because of issues with spread of invasive species. By favoring conditions supporting deer or shrubland birds, does the Forest Service leave itself liable when problems occur down the road?

I really don't know the answer to this question, but I read about people causing wildfires, on purpose or accidentally. Those people or corporations are often punished or held liable in some way, no? So while a wildfire is a fairly immediate effect, acting as a causative agent in the spread of Lyme disease seems irresponsible over a longer timeframe. Does the Forest Service support development and production of a Lyme vaccine? My work keeps me outdoors and often in the vicinity of the Green Mountain National Forest; will it be possible for me to get a free vaccine? I get bit by ticks now, but conditions are manageable with vigilance and clean-up protocols. Are the state and federal agencies acknowledging this growing dilemma and their direct role as it unfolds? Or will I be on my own as the conditions worsen? Please help me understand how containment of Lyme disease and vectors of transmission plays a role in USFS planning. But please do not give me the usual worthless advice to avoid tall grass and brushy areas; that seems to be standard boilerplate advice and does nothing for people who work in fields, meadows, pastures, grasslands, shrublands, and riparian zones. Thank you.

The second concern I mention is terrestrial invasive plants, Japanese stiltgrass in particular. I have seen stiltgrass in Maryland, and have had long conversations about it in Connecticut, Michigan, and Virginia. When people wish to speak in clearest terms, they simply say that deer plus Japanese stiltgrass is a death sentence to forest regeneration. That sounds pretty bad. What does the Forest Service hope to do about that? Are there plans to bring back top predators to contain deer populations? Are special interest groups pushing for young forest in Vermont because forests in their own states are so decimated beyond repair? Again I do not have access to the answers or the thinking here, and my concern also brings in the financial liability. Will a failure on the part of the Forest Service leave taxpayers holding the bag / bill? We need a viable forest, and people will not be happy if bad policy brings about catastrophic change.