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Comments: I support white pine removal for the following reasons having to do with wildlife habitat, particularly for the struggling ruffed grouse:

RGS & AWS supports the project and offers the following suggestions to ensure the project meets its goal of improving forest resilience, increasing species and structural diversity, and providing high-quality habitat:

Maximize ESH creation to the extent possible within the project's parameters, the main goal of which we acknowledge is to restore off-site white pine stands to a more natural species composition.

Utilize treatments that will create functional ESH for wildlife species and regenerate hardwood and yellow pine tree species. This means moving stands that are currently proposed as "Free Thinning" and "Variable Retention Thinning" treatments to "Thinning with Patch Clearcuts" or "Stand Type Conversion Harvest." For stands with a higher portion of hardwood trees in the overstory, consider implementing a shelterwood harvest (overstory removal with reserves) instead of the currently proposed treatments.

Grapevines should be retained, when possible. Grapes are a very important food source for grouse and other game and nongame species, and the vines also provide excellent cover for grouse. Because the vines can deform, suppress, and kill crop trees, it's understood there will have to be a balance between providing this important habitat feature and protecting timber values.

Grouse drumming logs should be retained or recruited in harvest units. Logs at least 10 inches in diameter and 10 feet long located on upper slopes and ridgetops or above logging roads have been found to be preferred by grouse in the Appalachians.