

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/26/2023 2:39:29 PM

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Comments: I support the Croatan National Forest (CNF) plans for repairing and improving the Neuse River Recreation sites. I am a Craven County resident; my yard abuts National Forest land. I have been a regular user of the recreation sites since the 1980s. As a professional Earth and Environmental scientist, I have published research on the Neuse River estuary and the Croatan National Forest since the early 1990s and continuing to the present.

I will not dwell on scientific and technical aspects of the Environmental Assessment and the proposed actions, as I was involved in providing a specialist report for the EA. Suffice it to say that the negative environmental impacts will be minimal, and far outweighed by the benefits. I also judge the proposed repair procedures and improvements to be technically sound.

Since 2016, through nothing but good fortune and dumb luck, I have been fortunate enough to own property on the Neuse estuary. During an earlier stint in Craven County between 1986 and 1997, and during frequent visits to relatives here in the interim, we were-like the vast majority of eastern North Carolina citizens-not so lucky. The CNF recreation sites provide public access to public waters and shorelines that is not available except in urbanized, developed settings. This is vitally important to fulfilling the recreational mission of the forest, and for public education and appreciation of these critically important resources that are otherwise under intense pressure from water pollution, shoreline development, climate change, and sea-level rise. They should certainly be reopened for public use and protected. The proposed action will also improve public safety and aesthetics at the Neuse sites-the granite boulder rip-rap at three of the sites is hazardous, of limited recreational utility, ugly, and makes for poor habitat.

Please feel free to contact me if you need further information or elaboration.

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