Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/31/2024 2:58:01 PM
First name: Nathan
Last name: Hawkins
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I object to large portions of this proposal. Foremost, the proposal does not include a number of power outages caused by trees impacting the lines in the existing corridor. This is key to determining the need for widening the corridor.

Second, I am doubtful about the stated lack of ecological impacts, or that the project appropriately manages the impacts. Widening the corridor will be a net negative for many species of terrestrial organisms.

Additionally, corridors such as this one are avenues for the dispersal and persistence of invasive species. The high frequency disturbances of clearing and spraying exclusively with the target of modifying the structure of the vegetation to maintain a certain height will serve to promote the growth of many undesirable invasive species that will have a very large negative impact on the surrounding forests. Species such as kudzu, Russian olive, multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, and oriental bittersweet are particularly notable ones that already exist in the corridor and will be given even more space to take hold with a widened corridor. I see no plan in the documents provided for Duke to address invasive species. I do not feel like shoving that responsibility entirely onto the USFS biologists and foresters is fair.

Also previous corridor clearing efforts have utilized and impacted public recreational trails with poor or a complete lack of information about those impacts. Recreational users need to know when the trails will be impacted so they can account for these actions in their plans. Duke has a poor track record in this regard.

Duke needs to show how frequently power outages occur as a result of hazard trees within this corridor, and to provide an estimate of the reduction in power outages as a result of this proposed action. Under no circumstances do I support widening the ROW to 100ft. If action is warranted, I support the absolute minimum impact to the forest. The current 50ft ROW plus a 50ft HTZ seems to me to be reasonable way to minimize risk to power transmission while also minimizing impacts to the forest.