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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Dave Casey,

I want to thank you for your detailed analysis in developing a plan that seeks to restore, manage, and enhance the wild public lands we so greatly depend upon. I am especially appreciative for the opportunity to comment on this project as it is the first I have ever provided comments on (will not be my last) and happens to be a project that would have a direct impact since I live locally and visit the area on a weekly basis.

I support the recommendations outlined in this plan as it will help reconnect streams that support habitat for trout and other aquatic species, return much needed fire to the landscape, and most importantly provide much needed early successional habitat through numerous treatments.

Additionally, I support the recommendations made by the Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society. The Forest Service should seek to achieve Tier 2 objectives with assistance from partners. The best available science highlights the need for an increase in early successional habitat being restored to the Pisgah National Forest in order to restore species that are dependent upon this critical habitat (e.g., Ruffed Grouse, Appalachian cottontail, American Woodcock, Whippoorwill).

My personal experience exploring this tract extensively corroborates this science. Within the last year hunting season, I walked the area with a bird dog on a weekly basis, but unfortunately never located a single Ruffed Grouse or American Woodcock within the Lickstone Project area. On the contrast, when I sought early successional habitat in the nearby area, I was able to locate numerous Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock. While this is anecdotal, I can attest that management for this type of habitat has been successful in the local area and continuing this type of management for the Lickstone Project will ensure that there is this type of habitat in the future for my children and the species that depend upon it.

Lastly, this comment process has helped me become more aware of the need to encourage and mobilize the numerous other individuals like myself that are encouraged by the active management recommended by this Project knowing that this will help support the many game (e.g., Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Appalachian Cottontail, and White-tailed Deer) and non-game species (e.g., various bat species, Whippoorwill, various songbirds, and pollinators) that we have seen decline over years. Again I thank you for your extensive efforts and am encourage you to continue with the recommendations.

Best regards,

Zachary Stines