

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/19/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Albert

Last name: Bourgeois

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I hunt, fish, camp and hike in Virginia's National Forests (specifically the George Washington NF). It is obvious that this forest and many like it in the Appalachian Mountains are dominated (>70%) by 80 year old and older forest stands. This isn't a healthy, diverse, and thriving forest. There needs to be a better distribution of forest age classes across our National Forests to get them in balance with healthy forest prescriptions.

Therefore, I support the proposed action Alternative 2, which I feel directs the National Forests toward better stewardship of the lands under their jurisdiction. Old forests stands are only one of several successional stages in healthy, diverse forests. Emphasis on increasing old growth over other important ecological forest conditions can negatively impact wildlife habitat, carbon stewardship, resilience and biodiversity. Many state Wildlife Action plans list a predominance or early successional dependent wildlife species as "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" and the reason is related to loss of this young forest and grassland habitat. Active forest management needs to be promoted and barriers to implementation of timber management looked at to streamline management options, while still maintain biological oversight. and protection. There also needs to be flexibility in management practices and local decision making to allow the National Forest to be more resilient and diverse. We need procedures to expedite decisions faster to complete management on the ground! In closing, let me encourage you to not give way to emotional and deceptive agenda's. We need science based management decisions to overrule emotions. Our National Forest have enough acreage where all interested users can achieve what they desire, but they need to recognize that many different people come to the forests for different reasons. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Al Bourgeois