

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/3/2024 6:45:01 PM

First name: Jeremy

Last name: thompson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: October 3, 2024

Subject: Support for the One Mile Lonesome Ridge Integrated Resource Project

Dear Mr. Sjostrom and the Androscoggin Ranger District Team,

Thank you for accepting comments on the proposed One Mile Lonesome Ridge Vegetation Management Project.

As a 60+ year New Hampshire resident, I have spent much time on the WMNF engaged in recreation including birdwatching, hunting, fishing, hiking (recent completion of the 48/4000!), mountain biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and more.

I am pleased to see that the One Mile Lonesome Ridge Integrated Resource Project includes a wildlife habitat management objective. I have witnessed over the years the decline of my favorite gamebird species the Ruffed grouse on the forest along with the habitat suitable for it. Of all my forest related recreational pursuits, bird hunting is one of the few that I need to look to places other than the WMNF. The WMNF is in critical need of regeneration age class and young forest age class wildlife habitat. Research validates what I have witnessed:

*The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department performs an annual survey of grouse observations by hunters (Grouse Observation Rates by Region). Reports for the White Mountain Region shows that between 2002 and 2022, hunter observation rates for Ruffed Grouse have fallen from over 1.6/hr hunted to less than 0.6/hr. This 60% decline specific to the White Mountains region is near linear over the time period pointing to habitat loss, not annual population variation typical of this species, as a factor.

*The December 2020 report by the Eastern Working Group titled Ruffed Grouse Population Declines in the Eastern United States reports a 69% decline in ruffed grouse populations in New England, and the loss of young forests as the primary driver of the decline.

On the One Mile Lonesome Ridge HMU mature forest is dominant and regenerating forest is below Forest Plan targets. Young Forest Species have declined in recent years and continue to decline as the Forest Plan targets for regeneration have been missed. Habitat decline is a critical factor for Ruffed grouse and the suite of species that require young forest such as American woodcock, Snowshoe hare, Canada lynx, Golden-winged warbler, and Olive-sided flycatcher to name a few.

I support the One Mile Lonesome Ridge Vegetation Management Project's goals of improving wildlife habitat by creating regeneration growth, young aspen/birch forest, and wildlife openings. I hope that well timed re-entry will solidify this move in the right direction for the critical need of this type of wildlife habitat.