



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 11 September 2019
To: District Ranger Lauren Stull
From: Jacob Pries, Policy Intern
Re: Piney River Vegetation Project Support

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), we would like to state our support for the proposed forest management activities under the Piney River Vegetation Project being conducted by the United States Forest Service. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. Founded in 1988, the QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

At QDMA, we believe that proper forest management practices are vital to the preservation of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and the white-tailed deer hunting tradition. With proper management of our forests being so vital to their successful preservation, it is important to support forest management activities that encourage a diversity of age classes within the forests like the activities being proposed in the Piney River Vegetation Project. The presence of early successional forests along with late successional open canopy forests provides the necessary enhancement of wildlife habitat that will benefit a diverse collection of species including white-tailed deer.

The healthy population of white-tailed deer within Virginia contributes to a deeply rooted hunting tradition and white-tailed deer hunters are an important driver of the state's economy. The white-tailed deer that hunters pursue depend on the sound forest management activities outlined in this proposal. Whitetails are the most popular big game animal in the U.S., and whitetail hunters are the foundation of a nearly \$67 billion hunting industry. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, approximately three of every four hunters pursue whitetails and according to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, \$21.30 million was raised by hunting license fees in Virginia just last year. Additionally, the hunting industry within Virginia helps to contribute \$2.38 billion a year to the state's economy and helps support 39,164 jobs. The well-being of the state depends on the sound forest management strategies outlined in this proposal.

Additionally, these forest management activities will help to provide improved access to the lands that are crucial to the continued existence of recreational opportunities by improving parking areas and forest service roads. Hunters are the original conservationists who have continually provided extensive funding to wildlife and habitat conservation efforts. By increasing the accessibility of these lands, you will increase the opportunity for individuals to experience what makes the time-honored tradition so great, thus ushering in the next generation of conservationists. On behalf of the QDMA, we would like to urge you to support this proposal and we thank you for your time on this matter.

Respectfully,

Jacob Pries
Policy Intern
Quality Deer Management Association