



December 19, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

Indiana's state forests provide countless benefits to the state, and timber management practices such as single-tree selection and thinning are commonly used tools that play an important role in ensuring their long-term health and sustainability. Healthy and diverse state forests support wildlife habitats, promote soil and water conservation, supply sustainable timber resources, and create recreational opportunities for all Hoosiers. We strongly support the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' science-based forest management practices on Division of Forestry (DOF) lands, including the proposed timber harvest on 299 acres in the backcountry area of the Yellowwood State Forest to provide these values.

The Yellowwood State Forest Management Guide, which was developed with input from the public, recommends using a combination of single-tree selection, improvement cuts designed to remove stressed or damaged individual trees and thinning cuttings to enhance the growth and vigor of the forest. Consistent with the management plan, the proposed harvest will, on average, remove only five to seven diseased, damaged, or stressed trees per acre to reduce competition and increase hard mast production in the residual oak and hickory for the benefit of wildlife.

These science-based forest management practices provide many benefits for both game and non-game wildlife species such as the golden-winged warbler, white-tailed deer, Indiana bat, timber rattlesnake, wild turkey, hooded warbler, bobwhite quail, and ruffed grouse. These species rely on disturbances to set back the succession of the forest, and in the absence of natural disturbances such as wildfire and wind storms, active forest management practices are necessary to mimic natural disturbance regimes to create young forest habitat for disturbance-dependent species. In addition to leaving the healthiest mast-producing trees, the proposed thinning and single-tree selection harvest on Yellowwood State Forest would create openings in the forest canopy to allow increased sunlight to reach the forest floor. This will promote understory herbaceous growth and young forest regeneration to provide the habitat structure and composition that early seral-dependent wildlife species require. A diversity of habitats supports a diversity of wildlife, and the DOF's efforts to restore healthy and diverse forests are critically needed by many species, as these natural, early successional forest habitats have become an increasingly rare component of Indiana's state forests.

Additionally, both the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forest Initiative – two independent certification systems that evaluate a diverse set of environmental, economic and social standards in determining whether forest practices are responsible and sustainable – have certified the management of the 158,300 acres of state forests managed by the DOF, including the Yellowwood State Forest. The DOF participates in a multiple-use forest management program and uses 30 professional foresters to accomplish their legislated goals of conserving natural resources for future generations. By generating revenue from timber sales, the DOF is able to support conservation programs and provide recreational opportunities for the public, while protecting water resources, improving forest health, and supporting diverse wildlife populations.

It is well-documented that the lack of young forest habitat in Indiana has contributed to the precipitous decline of many wildlife species, and we support the DOF's efforts to create better wildlife habitat by utilizing science-based forest management practices. While uneven-aged timber management (i.e. single tree selection) is not as beneficial to disturbance-dependent species as even-aged silvicultural methods, the proposed harvests are a step in the right direction towards improving wildlife habitat conditions for wildlife while ensuring the long-term sustainability and health of the Yellowwood State Forest for all recreational users.



QDMA
Quality Deer Management Association



Thank you for your consideration,

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