



Mid-Atlantic / S. Appalachian Forest Action Network Late Fall 2014



The fall bird season has been a challenge for many in this region. Field reports are spotty regarding grouse flushes. None the less I hope your season has and will be as rewarding as mine has. Being in the field with a bird dog can be very intense or a time for reflection and realization of our sense of place. Perhaps the down years are spaced to provide those afield the opportunity to take notice of where they are hunting and ask ourselves how did this habitat come to be. Is it natural disturbance, restoration enhancement or a result of forest management? If yes to the latter two, who was involved? Am I on State, Federal, County, Private or Industrial land? Take the time to thank whomever created it in your own way.

Linda

2014 Upland Bird Hunt in PA Wilds (66 hunters)

This year produced a flush rate for the two day hunt of just over 1 bird / hr. 17 grouse were harvested, 12 adult (6M, 6F) 5 juvenile (2M, 3F). 31 woodcock were reported as flushed. Crops contained crab apple, teaberry, acorns, evergreen wood fern, clover and rose hips. Clover was the most abundant.

Our huntsman had the opportunity to participate in a pilot study to determine the best method to sample blood from harvested grouse. The blood collected would be used to test for the presence of West Nile Virus (WNV). In the spirit of true conservation and love of the 'king' all agreed to take time out of their hunt to collect blood. Dr. Justin Brown PGC Veterinarian along with Lisa Williams PGC grouse and woodcock biologist explained the process, the need and the study to our group during the evening before the hunt. The huntsman reported back on their preference for collection method and other observations during this trial version of sampling. Dr. Brown was pleased with the amount of blood in the samples and the willingness of our members to participate (100% participation). The analysis will determine if WNV antibodies are present in this population of ruffed grouse. I will provide the results of this initial analysis as they become available.

Thank you again to our huntsman for your support! You truly are a passionate group of men and women.



Grouse captured in flight by huntsman John Gatto. Can you identify the saplings?





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George Washington National Forest: 2014 Forest Plan Released

Read the Plan in its entirety by following the link provided
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gwj/home/?cid=stelprd3799959>

or

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/gwj/>
scroll to the bottom of the page

Summary of Key Changes from 1993 Current Plan to Final Revised Plan

Resource Area	Direction of Change	From 1993 Current Plan	To Revised Plan
Riparian buffers	Increases	66 feet	100 feet
Area suitable for timber production	Increases	350,000 acres	452,000 acres
Annual objective for timber regeneration	Increases	2,400 acres	1,800 to 3,000 acres
Annual objective for prescribed fire	Increases	3,000 acres	12,000 to 20,000 acres
Biological and geological areas	Increases	80,000 acres	121,000 acres
Wilderness	Increases	40,000 acres - Existing	70,000 acres - Existing and Recommended
National Scenic Areas	Increases	8,000 acres	75,000 acres - Existing and Recommended
Areas allocated for remote settings	Increases	251,000 acres	370,000 acres
Minimum road system needed	Decreases	1,700 miles	1,500 miles
Lands administratively available for gas leasing	Decreases	995,000 acres	10,000 acres

With these new changes come opportunities for RGS to remain engaged by commenting and participating in project development. Many of our members have interacted with the GW USFS personnel in these capacities in the past and I hope others will join in on their/our efforts.





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Nantahala and Pisgah National Forest Plan Revision Update:



The USFS is revising the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan. The plan will guide management of these forests, which constitute approximately 1.04 million acres, for the next 10 to 15 years. As part of the revision, the USFS has created two management areas that cover approximately 700,000 acres where science-based forest management activities (timber production and / or timber harvest classifications) can be used to create a mosaic of wildlife habitat.

The driving force in establishing these potential management areas is rooted in the lack of young forest habitat on these two National Forests (approximately 0.6% of these forests are classified in the 0-10 age class USFS data). The USFS recognizes the overall forest health issues, wildlife species declines, lack of overall biodiversity and lost opportunities for all forest users to equally pursue their chosen activities (hunting opportunities for example) surrounding the deficiency in this forest class.

The USFS asked for public input throughout the process and our members and other sportsmen responded admirably thus far. The foundation for our concerns are based on forest facts and current research which our members were able to convey in previous comments. USFS personnel recognize these shortcomings as well. We are turning the ship, it is just a very large ship, and has been on the same course for a very long time. Conservationists (sportsmen) are now realized as a powerful and knowledgeable group in NC. We need to keep our voice and actions strong.

The U.S. Forest Service is currently asking for comments on the proposed management areas by January 5, 2015. I encourage all recipients of this FAN to submit a few lines of support for the proposed management areas and to discourage the creation / designation of Wilderness and other preserved lands. I would also include that ruffed grouse are a potential species of conservation concern so management of their preferred habitat should be priority.

Public comments can be e-mailed to ncplanrevision@fs.fed.us. For more information about the Nantahala and Pisgah Management Plan visit www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nfsnc/home/?cid=STELPRDB5397660. Then click on the 'information and presentation shared at this meeting' for specific details.

See below for proposed Management Area table.





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Potential Management Areas for the Revised Forest Plan

Management Area	Estimated Acres	Suitable for Timber Production
1 – Forest Habitat Diversity	501,000	Yes
2A – Restoration and Connectivity	191,700	Yes
2 B – Restoration and Connectivity	24,100	No
3 – Backcountry	134,600	No
4 – Significant Recreation and Heritage Corridors	46,600	No
4A – Appalachian Trail		No
4B – Scenic Byways		No
4C – National Heritage Corridors		No
4D – Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers		No
5 - Special Interest Areas and Research Natural Areas	15,400	No
6 – Wilderness Study Areas and Recommended Wilderness Areas	26,900	No
7 – Congressionally Designated Wilderness	66,550	No
8 -Experimental Forests	12,250	No
9 – Roan Mountain	7,900	No
10 – Concentrated Recreation Areas	1,200	No
11 – Cradle of Forestry	6,800	No
12 – Administrative Sites	350	No

*Classifying lands as ‘suitable for timber production’ facilitates habitat management towards creation of young forests. If classified as ‘unsuitable’ the ability to create young regenerating forest habitat is almost eliminated.





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Charter Memberships Available for *American Woodcock Society*

Those who join the newly formed American Woodcock Society (AWS) through January 30, 2015 will become an AWS Charter Member, a special group who joined AWS during its inaugural year. Charter members receive a decal, commemorative patch and certificate to proudly display. To join, contact the membership department by toll free phone at 888-564-6747.

Also new or renewing members can join both RGS and AWS as a dual member for the discounted rate of \$60 (regular \$35 for each or \$180 for three years).

Help RGS / AWS Increase Support for Habitat and Preserve the Hunting Tradition

Participate in the RGS and AWS Member-Get-A-Member Campaign – Help us increase support for habitat and hunting – recruit a fellow grouse or woodcock hunter to become a member and both current and new members receive a \$20 Orvis gift card. The participating current member is also placed in a drawing for a chance to create habitat by contributing additional funds to the state Drummer Fund of the winner's choice. To participate, see the rules and regulations at

<http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org/201408%20Drive>.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and notify me of any email address changes:

Linda D. Ordiway, Regional Biologist Mid-Atlantic Southern Appalachian Region.

412-720-6037

Email: lindao@ruffedgrousesociety.org –

-The Ruffed Grouse Society is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to preserving our sporting traditions by creating healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife. For information on the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society, please call 888-564-6747 or check out the RGS website at www.ruffedgrousesociety.org.

Saplings are fire cherry / pin cherry.

