

May 10, 2010

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Monongahela National Forest,

The Marlinton White Sulphur and Gauley Ranger Districts of the Monongahela National Forest invite your input on the proposed ***Wetland Establishment Project***. The proposed project is located in Greenbrier, Nicholas, Pocahontas, and Webster Counties in West Virginia. The purpose of this notice is to inform you of the proposal and seek your comments.

The project would establish up to 120 small ephemeral, emergent, forested, and wet-meadow wetlands on mountain ridges in the Big Ditch, Big Mountain, Desert Branch, Hinkle Mountain, Hopkins, Middle Mountain, Peach Orchard, Shock Run, and West Cherry areas to provide habitat for animal and plant species. The wetlands would range from 0.01 to 0.5 acres in size. Heavy equipment such as a dozer and an excavator would be used to shape soils to form the wetlands.

Amphibians such as the wood frog and spotted salamander would use the new wetlands. The water in wetlands would likely be used by the northern long-eared bat, Indiana bat (Federally Endangered Species), eastern small-footed bat (Forest Service Sensitive Species), and other bat species, being of great value to pregnant and nursing bats. Birds such as the Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, and Louisiana Water thrush would use the wetlands. Beautiful flowering plants such as the cardinal flower, rose mallow, and buttonbush can be expected to grow in and around the wetlands.



Emergent wetlands like this one would be established

Wetlands would be established on mountain ridges that are widely spaced to provide water for bats. Clusters of wetlands of various depth and sizes would be established to improve habitat for frogs, toads, and salamanders.

Wetlands are uncommon on the Monongahela National Forest. While they can occur naturally on mountain ridges on the Monongahela National Forest, they are rare. It is estimated that 24-percent of the original wetlands in West Virginia have been lost. Evidence of historic actions taken to drain wetlands was identified on mountain ridges at and near some of the proposed

wetland establishment locations. These areas may have been drained for growing crops and for road construction prior to National Forest designation.

The project implements direction contained in Executive Order 11990 for Federal Agencies to *preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands*. The highly successful techniques developed for restoring and establishing wetlands by the Center for Wetlands and Stream Restoration would be used for this project. The wetlands would clean run-off and reduce flooding for communities located downstream of the project. They would increase wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities and add to the beauty of the landscape.



Forested wetlands like this one would be established

In addition, approximately 10 small ponds built years ago that are near wetland establishment areas would be repaired as needed and modified where possible to look and function like natural wetlands. Priority actions would include controlling erosion, reducing water depth by lowering dam height, creating more gradual slopes on dams, and adding large woody debris for wildlife.



This natural ephemeral wetland is located on a mountain ridge top within the Monongahela National Forest

This project responds to the following 2006 Monongahela National Forest Land and Management Plan goals: to provide a habitat diversity that supports viable populations of native species (WF01), to provide habitat for those wildlife species that contribute to social and recreational opportunities (WF03), to restore habitat for migratory birds (WF05), to provide

habitat capable of contributing to the survival and recovery of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (TE01), to identify TEP species habitat and opportunities to maintain, restore, or enhance habitat conditions (TE04).

I will be the Deciding Official for the Marlinton White Sulphur Ranger District wetland establishment areas, while Jared Johnson is the Deciding Official for Gauley Ranger District.

For copies of maps showing the locations of wetland to be established, and for additional information about this activity, or to provide comments, please send them to Wetland Establishment Project, Attn: Jim McCormick, at the address above. You may also request further information or email comments comments-eastern-monongahela-marlinton@fs.fed.us. Please include the project name in the subject line of the e-mail. You may contact Jim McCormick by phone at 304-799-4334, extension 25 with questions or comments. To best use your comments, please provide them within 14 days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,

Rondi L. Fischer
District Ranger