Warren County School District

Central Administrative Offices

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April 9, 2023

Mr. Rich Hatfield, District Ranger

Bradford Ranger District

29 Forest Service Drive

Bradford, PA 16701

RE: Hemlock Run Project

Dear Mr. Hatfield,

These comments are submitted to the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) in association with the “Hemlock Run Project”. These comments are submitted by the unanimous vote of the Warren County School District Board of School Directors. The Warren County School District (WCSD) is a public school district that educates approximately 4,000 pupils.

The WCSD is interested in all projects occurring on the ANF for a multitude of reasons. As noted in your 2007 Forest Plan “timber harvest supports local logging and related forest product processing, sustaining local jobs and income…” Obviously, the sustenance of local jobs and income is relevant and important to the health of the WCSD. Further, the Plan notes that “Revenues from timber sales provide financial support to local schools.” Beyond these financial matters, the WCSD is also interested in the issues of ANF health as many of our student-attendees, staff, and graduates either recreate or work in the forest; good environmental stewardship is also part of our curriculum.

The WCSD is particularly interested in the Hemlock Run Project because a part of the proposed project is located within the boundaries of the WCSD. As we have shared with you in past correspondence, we school directors have been worried about the poor health of the ANF in general. The Hemlock Run area is familiar to us as many of us drive and recreate in that area frequently. Many of us have had the opportunity to observe the poor health of the vegetation located there.

It is easy to see, in the Hemlock Run area, the same serious age class imbalance that exists in many places in the ANF. At first glance, the forest may look healthy. But any serious examination reveals the overabundance of trees in the mature category and very few trees in the early or young category. More important, after looking for a few moments, one can see that many of the mature trees are in very poor health.

We believe that aggressive management is required. In particular, we ask you to take steps to correct the great age imbalance and to harvest mature trees that are at risk of death from disease and other threats. We firmly believe that aggressive management geared toward developing a younger age class will also help the forest defend against non-native invasive species.

What we are requesting is consistent with goals already recognized and adopted. First, the current Forest Plan recognizes the serious age imbalance brought about by under-management upon the ANF. Second, we ask that you think beyond just the issues of forest health. We ask you to consider how the project can be developed so that it will help generate sustaining local jobs and provide support to local schools – goals that are recognized in the Forest Plan.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Mangione

Board President

Warren County School District