



November 22, 2021

Executive Director Bobby Wilson
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Ellington Agricultural Center
5107 Edmondson Pike
Nashville, TN 37211

Re: Bridgestone/Firestone Wildlife Management Area Quail Habitat Restoration Project

Position: Support

Dear Director Wilson,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I am writing to express our support for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's (TWRA) proposed quail habitat restoration project on the Bridgestone/Firestone Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The project falls within the vision of the TWRA's Strategic Plan for Northern Bobwhite in Tennessee (Plan) to create self-sustaining northern bobwhite quail populations throughout the Volunteer State. CSF applauds the TWRA for developing and implementing the Plan to provide quality habitat for northern bobwhite quail populations that have been on decline in the state for several decades.

Founded in 1989, CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislators to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. CSF has a strong track record in Tennessee, working with a range of conservation partners to protect and advance Tennessee's sporting heritage by supporting pro-sportsmen legislation and state fish and wildlife management objectives.

Tennessee, alongside 24 other states involved with the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NCBI), is on the front lines of quail restoration efforts. The NCBI recognizes that modern land management practices and the lack of active forest management have degraded habitat for northern bobwhite quail across hundreds of millions of acres in the United States, and the TWRA's Plan and its supporting projects, such as one proposed for the Bridgestone/Firestone WMA, would improve woodland habitat for quail to arrest their population decline in the state.

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Specifically, the proposed project would create an oak/pine savanna on a small portion of the Bridgestone/Firestone WMA to restore the early successional habitats that are critical to meeting the habitat needs of quail. Early successional habitats are in short supply on the Cumberland Plateau, and the proposed project would create habitat that benefits not only quail but also a wide range of game and nongame species including whitetail deer, wild turkey, the eastern cottontail, American woodcock, pollinators, and a wide range of songbirds. While some may view the immediate aesthetics of forest management negatively, the establishment of an oak/pine savanna would provide much needed habitat diversity to support diverse wildlife populations.

As you know, unlike State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are managed to support robust wildlife populations to provide quality wildlife-associated recreation and hunting opportunities. Similar habitat projects carried out by the TWRA on other WMAs have improved wildlife populations and provided excellent hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

As you consider this project, we hope you will consider the importance of Tennessee's sportsmen and women to the state's economy and conservation funding. In 2020, Tennessee's sportsmen and women contributed \$70.65 million to conservation funding generated through license sales and excise taxes on sporting-related goods, the "user pays – public benefits" structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding. Additionally, Tennessee's 994,000 sportsmen and women have a significant economic impact spending more than \$1.8 billion, supporting more than 26,385 jobs, and generating more than \$167 million in state and local taxes.

Tennessee has a rich hunting heritage, and the quail habitat restoration project proposed by the TWRA would further support Tennessee's sporting traditions. We strongly support the project and applaud the TWRA for conducting habitat work to support Tennessee's wildlife. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



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