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First name: Tina
Last name: Johnson
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Spotted salamanders (Ambystoma maculatum) are not considered threatened or endangered. Their populations are declining, however, due to habitat loss and fragmentation. I got to see one laying her eggs in a vernal pool in May of 2018, while walking through an area proposed for shelterwood logging in the Pine creek project. After witnessing the salamander laying her eggs, I was inspired to learn more about these amazing creatures. From what I now understand about their habitat needs, this mother and offspring, and any other spotted salamanders living in a shelterwood prescription zone are unlikely to survive if this area is logged as proposed.

Spotted salamanders can live to be 30+ years old, and is the only known photosynthetic vertebrate. It hosts an algae, Oophila amblystomatis. Research is ongoing to learn more about how this incredible relationship works.

Spotted salamanders need closed canopy forests and vernal pools to live. The entry on Spotted salamanders on Natureserv says "Needed conservation measures include protection of vernal pools and adjacent wooded areas up to at least 200-250 m from the pools. Also, regulatory agencies should attempt to minimize forest fragmentation. The species could benefit from regulations that minimize acid deposition." And, "Threats to local populations include intensive timber harvesting practices that reduce canopy closure, understory vegetation, uncompacted forest litter, or coarse woody debris (moderately to well-decayed) in areas surrounding breeding sites (deMaynadier and Hunter 1999). Dispersing juveniles tend to avoid open canopy habitat, so deforestation and fragmentation likely reduce dispersal rates between local populations and could negatively impact population persistence in altered landscapes (Rothermal and Semlitsch 2002). Negative impacts of intensive timber harvesting extend at least 25-35 m into uncut forest (deMaynadier and Hunter 1998).

Many populations are becoming increasing isolated as deforestation and loss of vernal pools reduce gene flow among demes (Petranka 1998). This may result in inbreeding depression and reduce the probability of reestablishment of extirpated populations.

Local populations may be heavily impacted by excessive mortality of adults caused by vehicles on roads near breeding sites. Roads negatively impact salamander abundance in roadside habitat and may serve as partial barriers to movement (deMaynadier and Hunter 2000)."

It is disheartening that there is no process to consider the effects logging has on this salamander species since they are not considered threatened or endangered. I am against the shelterwood logging prescriptions that will kill these incredible salamanders, destroy their habitat and eliminate their ability to breed for generations to come.

For the sake of these incredible creatures, as well as many other species that are considered common enough to ignore, I am opposed to the shelterwood logging in the Pine Creek proposal and ask that this commercial logging prescription be removed from the project.

I also oppose aspects of this project which interfere with hiking the Sheltowee Trace. I am opposed to logging along the Sheltowee Trace. I support moving the Trace off Poison Honey Rd, but subjecting hikers to logging trucks along the Poison Honey Road section, before you move the trail off the road makes no sense. I suggest moving the Trace off the road without doing the logging.

Tina Marie Johnson
Berea, Kentucky