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Organization:

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Comments: Mr. Olsen,

I'm writing to you to express my (continuing) concern over the NFS's efforts to weaken protections for threatened and endangered bat species on the Daniel Boone. The efforts to frame the Forest Plan Amendment in terms of restoration and reducing impact to aquatic species is woefully disingenuous, given a history of claiming that current and former logging/'restoration' projects had negligible impacts to stream quality.

It would be refreshing if the Forest Service would either acknowledge that yes, in fact, the current status quo is negatively impacting aquatic habitat and halt all logging projects until this can be addressed adequately; or make completely clear to the public that the primary concern here is 'getting out the cut,' not any form of habitat restoration, and that our threatened and endangered species are significantly lower priority than increasing the rate of timber harvest (and yes, I know that there's no effort to increase the allowable harvest as defined by the Forest Plan--but I also know that it's the very protections that you're attempting to nullify that keeps the cut level well below those allowable harvest quantities.)

Ultimately, I'd really love to see more of an effort to shift management practices away from the constant creation of early seral habitat and more toward managing for old growth characteristics on our public lands. I'd love to see an effort to take into account the fragmented nature of the Daniel Boone, and the broader context of what's happening on private land within the proclamation boundary (where due to private land management practices, significant quantities of 'early seral habitat' are constantly being created).

On our public lands, we have the opportunity to prioritize the needs of the many species who require old forests to maintain sustainable populations (and I'm talking forests with trees many centuries old--as well as younger trees, of course--including large diameter downed woody debris, not just 100-200-year-old trees that then get logged out). The NFS is in a position to actually enhance biodiversity, but the constant rhetoric of early seral habitat creation is not even close to the whole picture, and there are an increasing number of people engaged with our public lands who understand this. I hope that here in KY, those of you in the Forest Service will take a stand against the mandates coming down the line to increase the cut, and actually do what's best for our forests, including the endangered bats who rely on undisturbed areas to raise their young.

In summary, I oppose the Forest Plan Amendment in its current form. We can do better than this.

Sincerely,

Xyara (Stella) Asplen

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