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First name: Xyara

Last name: Asplen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: South Redbird Wildlife Enhancement Project

I hardly know where to start when it comes to this project. The whole thing is abhorrent, especially when juxtaposed with the appalling degradation of land in the Group One project. To claim that this is about improving forest health is beyond the pale.

I understand that early seral habitat is important. So maintain the areas you cut over the last few decades-- maybe cut out the red maple and tulip poplar that's dominating in areas supposedly all about oak regeneration, and return that to early seral habitat. But leave our old trees and healthy forest alone. Old growth is also an important habitat type, and one sorely underrepresented in the Boone.

There's been a profound lack of ground-truthing forest age and habitat type on the Redbird. I've spent time in the Little Flat Creek old growth, which I hear you still fail to recognize as such, though thanks for sparing it...one bright spot in an otherwise disappointing update since my scoping comment. I've also seen the invasive species hells, the eroded hillsides, the networks of bulldozed skid roads, the landslides into waterways that have permanently altered the landscape and ecology in the Group One project, and the idea that this could spread like a sepsis to more areas of our Redbird district makes me nauseous.

Streams within the project area are considered Critical Habitat for the Kentucky arrow darter, as well as being home to the federally endangered snuffbox mussel. To claim that waterways would be unaffected by the logging is sheer hubris, especially given the observable levels of massive erosion in Group One. This is unacceptable.

This project needs to be sent back to the drawing board--or, preferably, the compost heap. Maintain what you've already cut since the 1980s if you really want to improve the health of our public lands. Log adjacent to existing roadways if you absolutely must to meet your quotas--though personally I believe a moratorium on commercial logging in the Redbird should be implemented until the travesty of Group One is addressed and what mitigation is possible has been accomplished.

This is our land. We, the public, are watching, we care, and we'd rather support you in good and necessary work than fight you over such a poorly conceived (and, almost inevitably, poorly implemented) proposal as this. I had hoped to see more concerns addressed between scoping and the draft EA, but since it's come this far, hear us now and let it be far enough!

Sincerely,

S. Xyara Asplen

554 Wolf Gap Rd

Berea KY 40403