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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I spoke at the Williamsburg meeting on Nov. 17, but I wanted to offer an official, public comment on the Jellico proposal. I own 170 acres on Osborn Creek in McCreary County. My concern is not only that this project would utterly destroy the natural beauty of the surrounding mountains, it would seriously impact my land. Osborn Creek runs through my farm for half a mile. If you clearcut Little Rock Creek mountain, there is no question in my mind that Osborn Creek will be prone to flooding, reducing my ability to enjoy and use my fields and bottomland. I am also entirely opposed to herbicides. Let me be clear, if this project moves forward and the actions of the USFS in any small way impacts my land, I will pursue legal action against the USFS with a vengeance.

I listened to the forest service employees' explanation about herbicide use at the Williamsburg meeting. The answers provided to the concerned citizens were quite pathetic. In short, the forest service knows that they cannot guarantee no runoff from herbicide use, nor can they guarantee no landslides resulting from clearcutting mountainsides.

I studied environmental and agricultural history at Mississippi State University. I finished a PhD in that field and wrote a dissertation explaining how poor government choices and modern, corporate America have consistently ruined the economy and ecology of rural Kentucky since the end of the Civil War. Doesn't look like things have changed much in the past 150 years. The USFS does not have a stellar track record for making quality decisions when it comes to land conservation and forest preservation.

So what's the problem at hand? First, few if any residents in this community want this project to move forward. Second, there is little science to prove the project is the best option for proper forest management in Appalachian terrain. Third, the environmental history of southern Appalachia repeatedly shows that clearcutting is a bad idea (and probably most of the thinning envisioned as well.) Finally, the motivation and impetus behind this proposed project remains unclear. Why is it necessary? Where is the money for the timber supposed to go? Is there something detrimentally wrong with the Jellico mountain forests that requires this massive undertaking? If so, what is it?

What's an alternative solution? To be blunt, leave it alone. The noise and land pollution that would be caused by your machines, the loss of beauty inherent to these mountains, the vast potential for flooding and herbicide damage to private property is not worth whatever the forest service sees as "necessary" or "beneficial" for the management of these forests. The costs are too high. Count the costs.

The USFS motto is "Caring for Land and Serving People." Prove it.

-Dr. Alan Harrelson