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First name: Eugenia
Last name: Jones
Organization:
Title:
Comments:
As both a resident of McCreary County, KY and individual who loves the beauty of the Little Rock Creek and Osborne Creek areas, I am very disturbed about the proposed Jellico Vegetation Management project.
Below are a few of my concerns. Hopefully, the project will be redesigned to enhance the beauty of the area and focus economic benefit toward tourism development, lessen health concerns (from the use of herbicides), eliminate valid concerns in regard to potential erosion/landslide/flooding risks, and better maintain habitats for existing endangered species.

1. LANDSLIDES/FLOODING/CLEARCUTTING:
Some data indicates soils in the proposed harvest area are low strength and almost the entire Jellico region is rated as the poorest suitability level for using timber harvest equipment. This directly correlates with the possibility of landslides. Clearcutting will result in more water finding its way into the valleys where people live, worsening flash flooding. Recent road construction in the Osborne Creek area has shown the concerns about landslides, flooding, etc. to be valid concerns.
2. ENDANGERED SPECIES
According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife data, the Jellico Mountain area is home to at least 17 endangered species and 12 migratory bird species of concern. One of these endangered species, the Cumberland Darter (Etheostoma susanae) is only found in isolated populations in the upper Cumberland River system of Kentucky and Tennessee, and does not exist anywhere else in the world. In Kentucky, 13 streams in McCreary and Whitley counties, are considered "critical habitat" for this fish, and much of this habitat is in the Jellico project area.
3. USE OF HERBICIDES
Despite regulations regarding the use of herbicides, the use of chemical herbicides as part of the project is disturbing. McCreary County, which is predominantly federal land, is/has been subjected to the reoccurring use of herbicides over much of its area. One can't help but question the wisdom of once again using herbicides in such a large, long term project, particularly in a county that already has a higher than average cancer rate.
4. ECONOMIC BENEFIT/IMPACT ON SCENIC BEAUTY
Considering the beauty of the area, why not invest in the economic benefit of tourism? Admittedly, forest management is necessary. However, some of the methods proposed in the project will be detrimental to the beauty of the area. Potential development of tourism in the area will be negatively impacted. Also, the McCreary County portion of the project will see less daily economic impact as most money trickling into the local economy from logging (gas, meals, equipment etc.) will likely not touch the business areas of the county.