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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a resident of McCreary County, I have lived through a variety of natural disasters where land stewardship exacerbated or mitigated the impacts. As an environmentalist and self-admitted tree-hugger, I don't doubt the value of the Forest Service in making life better for both the wildlife and the civilized critters of these hills and hollers.

I am highly concerned about the Jellico project. It presents a few issues that I don't feel the Forest Service has adequately addressed.

The first is the weakness of steep slope topsoils in absence of our largest trees. Landslides and creek pollution have already destroyed so many hills, homes, and waterways in Appalachia, including those beside my own house. I wouldn't wish those dead waters on my neighbors.

My second concern is economic. While these lands aren't being actively exploited for tourism and won't be used for commercial development afterwards, I fear that 40 years of private logging represents just more value leaving the county. We have already experienced over a century of what Ross Perot called "The Great Sucking Sound" and I do not believe the funds from that logging will return and recirculate in the county.

I am also worried about the increase in invasive species. The Forest Service has acknowledged that invasive species are more likely to grow along logging roads, and that previous logging lead to the overgrowth of invasive species like Trees of Heaven. With unique species only found in Jellico likely to be targeted by this project, I would hate to see another manmade extinction here.

My final concern is post-cut stewardship. In several places I have seen the Forest Service promise to regrow the land natively and healthily after cutting or after Forest Fires, and after each one little to nothing is done. Excuses are rare, and often cite budget cuts. In an era of climate change and end-stage capitalism, those budget cuts are only likely to grow.

Even now, there are spots along Highway 90 in Parkers Lake where loggers cleared strips and hillsides but even a year later not a single reclamatory action appears to have been taken.

Between ecological damage, economic damage, and a lack of faith in the USFS' post-cut stewardship, I cannot support this cut at this time. Once these concerns are mitigated, I am perfectly happy to adjust my view. My concern was, and is, always that the forest be healthy. Healthy forests mean healthy citizens.

Thank you for your time.