

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/3/2022 3:20:45 PM

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Comments: I am writing my concerns about the Jellico Vegetation Management Project #63037.

There are numerous issues raised by the prospect of this project going forward.

First, but not necessarily foremost is the additional threats to wildlife. There are 17 endangered species and 12 migratory bird species in the area of the project. The disturbances and consequences from the proposed work will increase the threats to these protected, or threaten species. The destruction of habitat, and erosion into streams from invasion of equipment and machinery where they live, bred and raise their young will put undue burden to these species.

Next issue is the opportunities for and introduction of invasive plants. The areas which will be disturbed by the construction of roads and loading sites and removal of tree canopy will be prime location for invasive plants such as tree of heaven and autumn olive which have already made inroads in the Daniel Boone National Forest. These non-native plants out compete native plants and trees for light, nutrients and water.

In addition to the above issues are the lost of trees which help control flooding and help prevent soil erosion. Not only are the trees critical for these purposes, but the project will increase the threat from flooding and erosion because of the construction of roads and staging areas. These problems will be much worse because of the steep slopes of the mountainside and the unstable soils in the area. Flooding and increased erosion will be greatly enhanced by the inevitable landslides due to the loss of trees and disturbance of the root system which helps hold the soil. Steep slopes in the project area will make a certainty of this by product of timber harvesting. Heavy equipment can't work in the area without these tragic consequences.

Finally, and I believe most importantly will be the removal of trees over 100 years old which should make the areas where they are located as "Old Growth Forest" and deserving for special protection, not destruction. Old trees store CO₂ at a higher rate than smaller younger trees. In this time of global climate change, as demonstrated by unprecedented rainfall in Eastern Kentucky, and the massive flooding aftermath, we need to save the forest and the most important trees which are the "Old Growth Forest". An intact areas of large mature trees can do much more to benefit this area than the many types of harm which will result from this project.

I beg you to reconsider this whole project and truly protect our National Forest lands with all the many benefits it brings to the land and people of Kentucky.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice my opinions, and for your careful consideration.

David Collins