

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/6/2022 4:07:58 AM

First name: Cortney

Last name: Moses

Organization:

Title:

Comments: "This we know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us.

We did not weave the web of life,

We are merely a strand in it.

Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."

-Chief Seattle,

mid-1850's

Brother Eagle, Sister Sky

My name is Cortney Moses and I thank you for this opportunity. I write this comment as the owner of a certified organic farm on Jellico creek, a mother of two small children, and a lifelong citizen of Williamsburg and the Jellico Creek Community. At the turn of the century my grandfather, a Moses from wolf creek, crossed these mountains to make a home on Jellico Creek. From there, a strong tradition began of a family with deep ties to this land. Impoverished, with no electricity or running water, my grandmother, grandfather, my dad, and his 12 brothers and sisters survived because of what the land surrounding Jellico Creek had to offer and bless them with. They hunted fox squirrel from the oak trees, fished redeye and sun grannies from the creek, and hauled water from their natural spring. My father unknowingly instilled this inseverable connection to this place and every single tree, insect, and plant within me.

I start my comment with a narrative because when learning about the plans of the US Forest Service, I felt like I was about to lose a loved one. It felt like someone was going to harm my brother or sister and there was nothing I could do about it. The stages of grief have since followed. I have been experiencing ecological despair. I have thought about how this would affect my everyday life, my children's life, and their children. The potential effects this project could have on the community's mental health, anxiety, chronic stress, depression, fear, etc. are real - a profound trauma over the next 40 years. An intact natural environment is proven to reduce stress and anxiety. Hasn't eastern Kentucky dealt with enough ecological trauma over the past 100 years? Do we really need more extraction that leaves us hopeless and in despair?

I have heard a few arguments that logging is good because it creates food for wildlife. But think about all the land in Kentucky that does not have forests. Kentuckians are fortunate enough that they can go to northern, central, or western Kentucky where they are overrun with deer if this is what they seek. We are a strong, individualistic people, we don't want to be like those other regions, and we need a diverse Kentucky with forested mountains to complement the grasslands elsewhere. People visit the foothills of the Appalachians to see the leaves change to vibrant colors, not to watch the grass die.

Another claim the Forest Service vegetation management plan states is that it will create diversity within the forest. It appears the diversity they are referring to is tree age. This hardly seems like diversity to me and neglects all the other ingredients it takes to make a healthy forest ecosystem. A diverse forest includes thousands of species of plants, insects, fungi, animals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, lichen, and trees working together dying, growing, smothering, feeding, to reach homeostasis. In this management plan they also detail the use of herbicides, heavy equipment, and clearcutting which will have the opposite effect of creating true diversity.

The personal safety of myself and my family is also of great concern. With logging trucks driving up and down the road on which I reside for the next 40 years, how safely can my children ride their bikes to their neighbors' home? How can my husband and I safely go for a walk or run? On these narrow roads the likelihood of being hit head on by a logging truck drastically increases. Is this project worth my life or the life of my children? I hardly think so.

If this logging project is being done to generate economic returns, then this is a fool's errand. According to a FEMA report released on Nov. 7th of this year, the flooding in Eastern Kentucky has cost the federal government,

via FEMA and the SBA, over \$164 million in grants and loans to recover from the catastrophic flooding that occurred this spring. Clearcutting and thinning in the Cumberland River watershed will only exacerbate the flooding issues that have become worse and worse over the past few years. According to the US Forest Service's own 2023 FY Budget Justification, logging only generated \$9.4 million in revenue in 2021, whereas recreation and special uses generated \$111.9 million. So instead of earning money from this project, it will contribute to the flooding issues that cost the federal government millions of dollars when disaster inevitably strikes again. Also, in the 2023 FY Budget Justification "maintaining climate-resilient landscapes is central to Forest Service activities and goals." Therefore, this project seeks to undermine the economic and climate-change goals of the US government and the Forest Service.

The Coronavirus pandemic has created a wave of Americans seeking the outdoors and has been a boon for our National Forests. I suggest we capitalize on the economic opportunity and put the efforts of the Stearns Ranger district into building and promoting new hiking and mountain bike trails, campsites, and other recreational options. This would create much more economic stimulation for the community than logging would.

Therefore, due to the reasons listed above, and many more left unsaid I strongly oppose the Jellico Vegetation Management Project, as it is currently written, that has been put forth by the Stearns Ranger district.