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Comments: Historically, we Kentuckians have had our natural resources misused, stolen, plundered, and irreparably damaged by entities promising to have our best interests at heart. Therefore, our skepticism surrounding the USFS's proposed project in the McCreary and Whitley County, Kentucky, areas of the Daniel Boone National Forest should come as no surprise. We are concerned for the area this project will affect.

Our concerns are based on historical facts. Where clear cutting has taken place in the past, scrub forests have arisen only after many years, resulting in erosion, the growth of invasive, pernicious species, and a loss of usefulness of the acreage involved. Water supplies have been contaminated and native species have been destroyed. Where heavy equipment has been brought into our area for road construction and rock slide control, invasive species have been introduced. We are concerned about these consequences, as well as others that can have long-term effects on our communities.

These are a few of the concerns we have:

*Extensive erosion will be created by the removal of trees and other foliage, especially on steep, difficult terrain, and by machinery and the construction of numerous logging roads used to access the timber.

*Damage to water supplies, plants and animals, as well the health of human inhabitants will be caused by the application of herbicides, many of which have already proven to be harmful, but never the less still are being used.

*There will be extensive damage to the road system, i.e., access roads like Jellico Creek Road and others, which will sustain major traffic and overuse by heavy log trucks throughout a project projected to last forty years. Also of major concern is the danger to drivers who travel these narrow, curvy roads on a daily basis when they meet log trucks. Additionally, bridges on such roads are not designed to carry the excessive weight of loaded log trucks. Over time damage to the bridges and roads can itself result in a threat to the safety of local residents.

*Both affected counties have limited industry and income opportunities, and the rise in tourism in recent decades has been a boon to their economies. People come from everywhere to enjoy our beautiful scenery, clean air and varied outdoor activities. This region of foothills is the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains and shares some of the same plant and animal species and geological, historical and environmental features that make the area unique. We are concerned that extreme changes to the area will negatively affect the influx of tourism. One example is how the project might affect the Jeep Jamboree held each fall, which brings a large increase in income for Williamsburg and neighboring communities whose businesses benefit from hundreds of visitors. The route of the jamboree currently encompasses some of the area to be affected by this project.

*We are concerned that an emphasis on the value of certain timber varieties over others will result in the removal of, or damage to, certain plant species, including smaller, non-commercially valuable trees such as the various deciduous magnolias that grow in this area, mountain laurel, rhododendron, flame azaleas, an amazing diversity of wild flowers and many others. We want our native plants to be preserved, including the various unique varieties of grapes. Many of our plants are in danger not only from the herbicides and changes to their growing environment but also by the introduction of more invasive species whose seeds are carried on the equipment coming from other places to perform the proposed work.

*As residents of the area that will be affected by this massive project, we want assurances that studies will be made to catalog the plant and animal species actually in the area before the project begins, as well as studies that will continue to follow the development of all effects on those species as the project continues. We also want to know how negative effects will be handled.

*We believe that considerable consideration should be given to alternative methods of select cutting that will lessen the environmental impact imposed by invasive equipment.

We hope there will be a sincere effort on the part of the USFS to approach this massive, long-term project in a

way that will address our concerns and reduce or eliminate the damages that we believe are inherent in the current plan.