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Comments: As a faculty member at University of the Cumberlands, I have an interest in this project from two perspectives. As a trained plant ecologist I care deeply about the forested areas close by o where I live. In particular, the areas scheduled to be either clear-cut or thinned aggressively have outstanding qualities that would be not only dramatically changed, but destroyed in some cases. While there is a tendency among some to see older/more mature forests as not serving much purpose this does not at all describe the richness and qualities many of us see as ecologists. While they have a different species composition, to some extent, than more "manicured" forests do, they create habitat for species that thrive in more mature forests. Thinning aggressively and/or alternating that with clear-cutting would dramatically reduce the habitat needed for these very species. And that is aside from the carbon storage larger trees provideZ. Older, more mature trees increase diversity not only vertically above ground, but their extensive underground root systems impact microbial diversity. These mature trees often have high fruit producing capacity which proves tress for the future and food sources for many animals. The forests would not tea over in an average lifetime, at least not to maturity. Healthy forests with very old trees represent the most natural forest structure; they include a variety of size classes that are naturally, not artificially structured. They are self-sustaining.

As an educator I appreciate these older growth areas even more. They provide an opportunity for us to teach students the characteristics of naturally healthy forests. Some of the areas to be cut are directly in areas we currently use.

I believe all of appreciate mature forests and would be t