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Comments: I oppose this proposed logging project. It is almost inconceivable that the USFS would propose a logging project on the basis of improving the habitat of only the Ruffed Grouse. I suspect Grouse are no longer present in the northern reaches of the D. Boone Forest just like here in the southern districts. The Ruffed Grouse's demise in these areas has not been due to loss of habitat. Adjacent private lands have extremely diverse habitats that supported Grouse in the past. Those lands are no different today than 25 to 30 years ago. Grouse were in the D. Boone Forest then and can survive there now without habitat enhancement. Habitat is not the issue with absent Ruffed Grouse populations, both on private lands and in the D. Boone Forest. The Ruffed Grouse began disappearing roughly when Coyotes arrived on the scene as well as the reintroduction of the Wild Turkey. I grew-up in the rural of southeast Kentucky. There were loads of Grouse anywhere I hunted or roamed the lands, from McCreary and Whitley Counties to the Laurel River Valley before it was impounded by the Corps of Engineers to make Laurel Lake. Also, Rockcastle, Jackson, Laurel, Harlan and Bell Counties were loaded with Grouse. Twenty-five years ago, while driving the Little Shepard Trail in Harlan County (basically a one lane road), it was unusual to not see a male Grouse strutting his stuff in the middle of the road. It was not unusual to hear them drumming in any of the aforementioned counties. Today, the Ruffed Grouse is gone from these areas and not because of the loss of habitat. I highly question the results and accuracy of the "drumming" studies. Habitat improvement, natural or man made, has not resulted in a rebound in Grouse populations. I believe the data supports my statement.

The use of developing/improving the Ruffed Grouse's habitat or any other species is no reason to by-pass the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which requires the US Forest Service to assess the potential impacts of logging projects, solicit public input and consider alternatives that could limit environmental impacts. The NEPA process should be followed with respect to any and all proposed logging projects, no exceptions. Employing the Categorical Exclusion seems to open the door for the same approach to all future proposed logging projects. I ask, where is this going? Are there other species that will possibly be endangered as a result of this proposed logging project? Will by-passing the NEPA process (essentially short-cutting) have a negative impact on them? The NEPA process is suppose to let us know these and many other questions relating to the environment.

The logging methods to be used and areas affected should be fully disclosed. We the public have no clue which method that the US Forest Service plans to implement with this project, such as, clear cutting, two aged shelter wood, deferment harvest, etc. Also, attempting to establish an "even aged forest" is a futile endeavor with no conceivable benefit. No two trees of the same species will grow at the same rate due to location and soil conditions. The soil conditions throughout the forest land are as diverse as the vegetation. The end result for most of the cutting methods will end with a degraded forest due to stump growth, loss of potential due to cuttin sub-sized trees, even with no damage due to logging and increased potential of invasive species.

In conclusion, by fast-tracking the process by invoking the NEPA Categorical Exclusion basically excludes looking at alternatives that could possibly have far less environmental impacts on the forest and the wildlife therein. Also, the negatives relating to tourism can hardly be considered without assessing alternatives.