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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forest Service team, stakeholders, and decision makers,

I implore you to move forward with the Jellico Vegetation Management Project and actively manage our forests for the following reasons:

The problem: I'm concerned about the destruction of forest ecosystems due to well meaning but provably incorrect forest management policies. Essentially the federal decision to rarely cut anything on National Forests.

The result: Early successional habitat (10 years or younger) now makes up about 1% of forest cover, and 20 year old cuts aren't much better. Many animals need this cover, and they die if they are only left with 3-4%. This is especially true if they do not migrate.

The consequences: There are numerous downsides to this decision, including a few below.

- Loss of habitat / bio-diversity. Early successional forests provide cover and food sources that birds, bugs, and mammals need for survival and raising young. Migratory birds die and have smaller broods when they don't have anywhere to fuel up. When you walk through a National Forest, all you see is a food dessert (no understory or "salad" to eat), and maybe a few squirrels.
- Less environmentally friendly construction practices. Concrete/steel doesn't grow back and takes more energy to produce than lumber.
- Forest fires of greater intensity. Young forests hold moisture and have less fuel to burn.
- Ticks/lime disease. The best way to get rid of ticks is prescribed burns, but the practice has fallen out of favor
- Few alternative options to help affected wildlife. In many states, National Forests far exceed State Forest. We are left with little recourse in many cases
- Less science & more activism dictating policy. Biologists, forest managers, and scientists are losing seats at the table to environmentalists. If policies limit occasional cuts at National Parks because it's an eyesore and hard to educate the public, that's fine, but it's ridiculous for National Forests.

The solution: Give wildlife biologists a larger seat at the table - they know what healthy forests look like and what percentage should be successional. They have been raising alarm bells, but there's little political will to take action because they make less noise than environmental lobbies.

I appreciate whatever consideration you are willing to grant me, as well as others that believe similarly. We are a less noisy minority than the opposing side, but that doesn't mean we're incorrect. Also, please keep in mind that we are speaking about 1 project, and that the opposition has successfully gained support for their policies almost everywhere else. Please diversify your forest management policies on public land to 1) reflect the diverse public 2) measure successes and failures of different forest management strategies objectively.

All the best,

A concerned citizen that cares about wildlife and trusts that the trees will grow back