

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/18/2024 4:00:00 AM

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Comments: I am appalled of learning of the plans being made by The Forest Service whose motto states, "Caring for the land and serving the people" in regard to the Jellico Vegetation Management Project #63067.

I think what I find so frightening is that conserving mature forests is one of the simplest, most effective means for slowing the effects of climate change. While management decisions shouldn't be based solely on a forest's ability to draw down greenhouse gasses, decisions by the Forest Service should be informed by the best, most recent science regarding forests and climate change. The Forest Service should support the development and preservation of mature and old growth forests for both climate resiliency and biodiversity. To do otherwise in a growing climate emergency is irresponsible.

To assign this as a 40 year plan is even more irresponsible. I do not believe that this should be allowed as a time span to de-forest our trees for harvest. I really believe that with climate change, this should NOT be allowed. I read that you have an Alternative 1:

3,000 acres of logging over 4-6 years, including:

> 1,122 acres of two-age shelterwood

> 1,811 acres of commercial thinning

Timber Targets

? "As part of the NEPA process, it's essential to highlight my opposition to the Forest Service's indiscriminate cutting of older forests driven by volume-based timber targets. Older forests are vital for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and habitat preservation."

? "It's concerning that the Forest Service is placing the timber volume mandate above other critical forest needs like recreation, forest health, and water quality. By prioritizing timber targets, the agency risks undermining the overall well-being of our forests and the communities that rely on them."

? "Linking timber targets to performance reviews of Forest Service staff further exacerbates extraction from public land, potentially incentivizing actions that prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability. It's crucial for decision-makers to recognize the multifaceted importance of our forests and ensure that management practices align with broader conservation goals outlined in President Biden's Executive Order aimed at preserving mature and old-growth forests."

Landslide Risks

? "The Forest Service's analysis of landslide risks in the Jellico Mountains does not address the most relevant issues related to this significant hazard. Given the steep and landslide-prone nature of these mountains, it's crucial for comprehensive assessments to be conducted. I urge the Forest Service to take a deeper look at the landslide risks and the serious issues raised by Kentucky Heartwood. By prioritizing thorough analysis and incorporating additional expert guidance, we can better safeguard against landslide risks and ensure the safety and stability of the Jellico mountains and surrounding areas."

Logging of Mature and Old Growth Forests

? "Regeneration cuts, such as clearcuts and shelterwood logging, in mature and old-growth forests has no place in the Jellico Mountains. These practices pose a significant threat to the crucial role mature and old growth forests play in mitigating climate change, as emphasized in President Biden's Executive Order."

? "The best available climate science unequivocally demonstrates the importance of mature and old-growth forests for climate change mitigation. These forests act as essential carbon sinks, helping to absorb and store significant amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. By acknowledging this science, the USFS should align its practices with broader conservation objectives and contribute meaningfully to climate action efforts."

Interior Forests, Cerulean Warblers, Bats

? "It's imperative that the Forest Service adheres to the Forest Plan and provides a clear explanation of how they intend to maintain the 7,400 acres of habitat required by Cerulean Warblers in the Jellico's. These habitats are essential for the survival and well-being of these species, and it's critical that they are preserved and protected."

? "By removing regeneration cuts from the project scope and focusing on critical Cerulean Warbler habitat, as mentioned in Objective 1.1.B of the Forest Plan, the Forest Service can demonstrate its commitment to conservation and the broader goals of preserving biodiversity and ecosystem health."

Invasive Species

? "The Draft EA's analysis of the rampant Tree of Heaven infestation in the Jellico's is grossly understated. Large infestations, particularly stemming from areas previously logged by the Forest Service in the 1990s, pose a significant risk of spread with the proposed logging activities."

? "The potential for Tree of Heaven to foster explosive populations of the spotted lanternfly is alarming, as it can have detrimental effects on neighboring native species and agriculturally important trees, like fruit trees. Regardless of the which proposed action is selected, Tree of Heaven needs to be treated and maintained. The original proposed action addressed a large invasive issue and should not be dismissed regardless of timber volume extracted."

I have lived in Kentucky all my life. I travel up and down I-75 and coming into Kentucky from Tennessee is one of the most beautiful parts of the drive. Please do not take the habitat from the people and the animals. If you take all of the old trees, how much better are we than what Brazil is doing to the rainforest? Do not make a mistake in how you proceed. What you do now will effect your kids and grandkids for their future with more pollution, less trees to help with climate change, loss of wildlife habitat, and just an overall bad plan if you allow this to go into effect for 40 years. Buildings in accounting terms can only be depreciated for 39 years, and yet you want to go longer than that with this plan? Please do it for 5-10 years and reassessment after the time expires on whether it should be continued for another 5-10 years. Use Alternative #1 and think about your children, their children and their grandkids on what you about to do.

Thank you and I pray you all re-think your plans.

Lisa Fernandez