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Organization:

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Comments: Hello,

As part of the NEPA process, I am writing in opposition to the Forest Service's 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.

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.

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.

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.

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. Citizens are paying attention and are opposed to the direction of forest management proposed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Rawe