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Comments: This proposed logging project is completely irresponsible. 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. 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. 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 URGE the FS to prioritize the protection of endangered and threatened species within the Jellico project area. This region includes a substantial portion of the designated critical habitat for the federally endangered Cumberland darter (Etheostoma susanae) and habitat for the federally threatened blackside dace (Chrosomus cumberlandensis). These species are found only in the high-quality streams of the Cumberland Plateau, making them biological jewels of Kentucky. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has highlighted that current land use practices, such as agriculture, residential development, logging, and surface coal mining, continue to impact sediment and water discharges into streams, further threatening the habitat of the blackside dace. It is crucial to protect these habitats to ensure the survival and recovery of these unique and vulnerable species.