

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/24/2024 4:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

As I begin to write this comment opposing the Jellico Vegetation Management Project #63037 in Whitley and McCreary Counties, I can't help but think how I already did this about a year ago as did many others, so why am I doing this again? So in between jobs and other life activities, we are suppose to be able to attend town halls and write more comments, as in a hope that our opinions are valued to the federal government.... Forgive me if my trust in an overreaching and unrestricted federal government is not that high. I am as Patriotic as they come, but unfortunately my trust has diminished after so many lies from the government, but I am commenting in hopes I can be proven wrong and maybe have some of my faith restored in some of the branches of the federal government.

It should've been evident by the comments from the last forum posting and from talking to people around this area that the clear-cut logging and raping of the National Forest in this area is NOT wanted, but yet here we are still fighting. I like how you address this as the Jellico "Vegetation Management" project. That's insulting to my intelligence, because what I do at my personal farm is manage the property. There will be no managing here, as the goal here is to get in, cut the timber and get out, leaving the residents with the aftermath. Some of the aftermath will include polluted streams, erosion, non-native invasive plant and tree species, poisoned pollinators from herbicide use, displaced wildlife and fruit bearing trees such as Oaks and Walnuts that will not grow back for decades if they do at all.

I am not going to go through all of the same reasons why this is not a good idea as before, but I will highlight a few. These are already on record and I feel as though this is redundant. One reason I will bring to your attention again is, that IF this is such a good idea why don't they go do this in the Smokey Mountains or Yellowstone National Park or any of the many others? The answer is two-fold, one being it is not good for the areas and the other is these places generate money, so they are left alone. You want to come in to a place that does not attract many tourists and where a small number of people live and just take what they have, giving nothing in return.

McCreary County Kentucky is the poorest county in the nation according to economic statistics and the selling points on this project will be how this will benefit the area and provide jobs, but we know this is not true. Many people come here to camp, hunt, hike, run and enjoy this area, but that will not be the case when the mountains are logged. Do not misunderstand me, I am not a tree-hugger that is against logging. My dad use to do some logging and there comes a time and a place when this is beneficial, but not here in the National Forest, outsourced to people who do not care what the land is left like, because they do not live here. Much of this land has already been logged on private farms, so what is going to be left for wildlife if now even the National Forest is logged?

This project all boils down to a dollar and the federal government wants to roll in here and blow sunshine and rainbows up the rear-ends of the local people telling them how good this will be. I guarantee some politician somewhere has his/her hands in this and sees an opportunity to make some major money off the land that we call home. The government also likes to tell us the lie that this land belongs to us, the taxpayer and the people, yet one or two people can make the decision whether or not this project goes through, despite the fact that I'd bet 80% or higher of the local people are totally opposed to this project.

I could go on and on, but I have chores, responsibilities and other tasks that I have to attend to. I have to actually go manage my own farm in between the rain, but yet here I am at the last minute trying to get my comments in... again.

You know there is nothing good that is going to come from this project and I pray that whoever has the power to call this shot, does the right thing. I know you probably have a family, kids and bills to pay, but please do not sell out the people of Whitley and McCreary counties to the federal government. You know this is wrong so take this project away from here. We have asked you nicely to leave this area alone.

Thank You,

Matthew Ratliff