

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

First name: patty

Last name: draus

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a hiker, and live in Fayette County, Kentucky. I have car camped in the Jellico Mountains and enjoyed the freshwater streams.

I have multiple concerns about your logging proposal for Jellico Mountain. These are:

1. There is old growth (and near old growth 80-100 years old) that must be protected, according to the President's Dec 2023 Forest Plan amendment to conserve and steward old growth forests. The near old growth is the next generation, removing it will leave a significant gap in the characteristics of this forest. This entire age category of trees has an important role in fostering the next generations of trees. So, it is important to leave all trees >80 years of age.

2. The slopes are so steep, and the elevation is over 2000 feet. Logging on steep slopes causes sedimentation and landslides no matter the measures you take to prevent it. This area is really not amenable to logging. The landslides will threaten local homes, lives, sense of security, and water supply.

3. Logging roads, logging, vehicles, and equipment contribute significantly to sediment and runoff; and heavy logging equipment compacts the soil, making it hard for other remaining trees to survive once their roots are compacted. It's also hard for young trees to become established.

4. Logging equipment, all other associated vehicles, and logging roads are main causes of invasives entering the forest. I know there currently are established invasive plants and trees, brought in by previous logging projects. Only by "sterilizing" the logging equipment and vehicles can you prevent bringing in more invasives. Is this even feasible?

5. Jellico Mountain is full of potential, that you will take away by logging. Great potential for all sorts of outdoor activities: fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and others.

It is a paradise, and could be a destination vacation location like the Red River Gorge. You say this is not your current focus, but it should be. There should be a focus on trail creation and campsites. This could be a tourism driver for this area; but no one will come if you clearcut the forest. They come for the solitude and beauty. I ask you to readjust your focus and priorities. Do not take away the potential this mountain offers.

6. This is perhaps my most important concern. The Forest Service choosing not to use the Jan. 9, 2023 CEQ interim guidance because it was published 2 months after the start of this multi-year multi-step proposal is nothing short of irresponsible and egregious. Use of the most recent science by government agencies is essential in combating the climate crisis, and is what us citizens expect of professional government agencies and staff. You are failing on this. We should make no exceptions on taking sound measures to slow down this crisis. I could maybe understand if the guidance was published in Jan. 2025, but come on folks, it was 2 months, not 2 years.

7. Lastly, Trees Are Not A Crop. Jellico Mountain is not a tree farm. It is obvious to all but the most casual observer that your goal is to create a succession of trees at the desirable age for logging at varying intervals on into the future. Your desirable outcomes of: "3500 Acres young, even aged/ 1600 Acres mid, even aged/ 3500 Acres mid, 2 aged/ 1000 Acres old, 2 aged" describes this exactly. There is no mention of any purpose for having

many acres of uniform aged trees. Just timber targets, which this proposal doesn't mention. National Forest trees are not a crop, please stop treating the public commons like a tree farm.

There are these and so many other reasons to stop this process now. So, I support option 2, the No Logging option. Please do continue working to eradicate the invasives.

**In the future, if you develop truly sustainable logging practices, like local loggers have done, and at a much smaller scale, I will take a more favorable view of that sort of proposal.

Thank you for reading these comments.