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Comments: I want to first thank the FS for their commitment to responding to the local community and concerns raised in the initial phase of scoping for this project, evident in the Alternative #1 and #2 presented in this Draft EA. The greatest opportunity for "compromise" happens when federal agencies listen to their constituents, despite pressure from above. I recognize this as a step in the right direction for the FS in the Daniel Boone.

However, I am hesitant to trust these alternatives as legitimate. If you had not responded or provided "compromise" for the local community[hellip]the uproar from being ignored would have been far worse for y'all than anything I could say in my personal comment about this irresponsible proposal. After organizing and talking with the local community over the last two years, they might be willing to "compromise" (since eastern Appalachia is so familiar with over extraction and being used for their natural resources), but they will not be ignored or gaslit by a shorter-term project with "less invasive treatments" when they do not want any of it, at all.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

As I have been actively following the reading room, do all of these RGWS people LIVE in this project area? I'd love to know the stats of where these commenters actually live in comparison to the local folks begging for this to stop. Are these wildlife lobby group members commenting from the comfort of their living rooms in Nebraska or one of the Dakotas? We'll never know, but it sure ruffles my feathers (see what I did there) that a HUNTING LOBBY GROUP (not a bird group...a hunting group) has a say over public land management that directly contradicts what we know based on the best, and newest available science. Take that a step further and really look at the land-make up of this area when you incorporate ALL of the "land management" that the University of the Cumberland's does. They love to clearcut. Why do we not see the grouse returning as hoped, even with the extensive clearcutting done on UoC's property which has created more than enough early seral and successional habitat??

At the end of the day, please reconsider this project. Listen to the local community and make decisions for this project like YOU live in the project area.