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First name: Daphne
Last name: Baird
Organization:
Title:
Comments: On July 5, 1968, I saw Jellico Creek for the first time. I came to attend a friend's wedding, and her mother collected me from the bus station to drive me to their home for the weekend. As we left Williamsburg and went up what my friend's mother called "the mountain," I thought we were in beautiful country. I had no idea what I was about to experience. We turned left off Highway 92 onto a gravel road, and she told me, "This is Jellico Creek." As we began to descend a slight hill and round a curve, the valley opened up before me. As far as I could see, mountain after mountain, after mountain stretched to the horizon. Closest to me, everything was bright greens of every shade, with each successive layer becoming slightly bluer, until the last mountain faded into the deep green-blue that seems to hold up the sky. At that time, I had my first view of the most beautiful place I had ever seen, and I knew I was home. It was breathtaking!

My family had often traveled to the Great Smoky Mountains, but that was a National Park and was meant to be exceptional; this was private land that rivaled the views in the park. Sure, the mountains weren't as high, but the vista before me was extraordinary. As we drove down the hill, across the bridge over Jellico Creek, I wondered how anyone could be so blessed to live in such a beautiful, green place?

Little did I know that one day, that blessed person living here would be me! Later that year, I married my friend's brother, and although we lived in several states before we finally moved here in 2011, we were here as often as possible, and almost always at Christmas. Jellico Creek was my home long before we owned an inch of land here.

Through the years, we got in the habit of driving "up the creek" when we visited. To me, it was beautiful in any season. In spring, we enjoyed seeing all the wildflowers emerging: blue phlox, Virginia bluebells, spring beauties, dwarf iris, various trilliums, bloodroot, trout lilies, bluets, anemone, several varieties of violet and others that I could not identify. There were redbuds, dogwoods, service berries, and other blooming trees. I was often reminded of the old hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus." One stanza says, "Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodland, robed in the blooming garb of spring." The woods here always are dressed beautifully for spring!

We also could see several old chimneys, and steps where settlers had lived in old homeplaces. These mostly are gone now; their locations marked only by the daffodils, vinca, fire bushes, and yucca plants, as well as old apple trees that were planted long ago by others who loved this place as much as we do today.

As spring began to become summer, there were flame azaleas, mountain laurel, rhododendron, and deciduous magnolias continuing to grace the woods. Summer brought heat, and before the road was paved, dust. But even then, the overhanging branches provided a green haven that was much cooler than the open fields.

Autumn brought the riotous colors of red, yellow, gold, and orange of the diverse trees that populate the woods on upper Jellico Creek. The last to turn were the majestic oaks, with their, rich, more subtle tones of burgundy, bronze, and russet.

Even in winter, the woods here are beautiful, with the bright, white bones of the sycamores shining, and the dark brown, black, and grey trunks of all the other trees showing off their magnificent physiques, which in summer and fall are hidden by their foliage. Occasionally, a holly tree or a patch of ground cedar, fern, or wintergreen provides a splash of green. Snow is like icing on a cake.

There are those who say there is little scenic beauty of any note in the acres targeted by the USFS in the Whitley/McCreary portion of Daniel Boone National Forest. Those people have not seen what I, my family

members, and friends have seen. There are roaring streams, waterfalls, magnificent old growth forests, quiet coves and places of infinite peace and quiet. From my sunroom I have watched deer, turkey, bears, rabbits, skunks, squirrels, and even giant snapping turtles wandering through the yard. The view here is of mountainous areas directly targeted by this project, which are steep and subject to severe erosion. This view will never be the same if widespread clear cutting occurs here.

In a world constantly in search of tranquility, the Jellico Creek/Ryans Creek community has found a rare serenity. I believe that if there was infrastructure to support it, and encouragement for local entrepreneurs and business owners, ecotourism could become a viable source of income for our region. Instead of taking away Appalachia's natural resources to benefit other regions of the country, as history has shown time and again, it's time for our government to decide to keep those resources and the potential income they can provide, right here in Whitley and McCreary counties.

The USFS has shown how it can benefit the region by creating the Daniel Boone

National Forest in the first place. We have all seen the results of clear cutting in

the past and realize that if they had not preserved these precious acres, private owners could already have reduced our mountainsides to eroded, bare, scrub woodland. Now it's time to consider saving the mountains again. Dismiss the idea of clear cutting and generalized herbicides. If it is impossible to replace the harvested trees with seedlings, then no action should be taken at all. There is plenty of visual evidence of what happens when a clearcut area is left to regenerate "naturally."

Others have chosen to comment using data and concrete arguments, but this is a more personal objection to the project, because we all will be affected by it, personally. Real people from all socio-economic groups live in this area, and real people will find their way of life disrupted forever. I am reminded of the lyrics of Loreena McKennit's song, "Bonny Portmore," which tells the story of a real place in Ireland, where a beautiful forest was completely destroyed by the English, who hauled all the wood to England, leaving the Irish landscape barren. It also left the residents of that area in mourning for what they had lost and could never recover.