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First name: Laura
Last name: Dennis
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Good evening

I am filing a Notice of Objection pursuant to Title 36 CFR Part 218, in regards to the Jellico Vegetation Management Project.

I would first of all like to reiterate my objections to the 40-year plan, which I have submitted each time public comment has been opened.

I do not see any benefit to adopting the 40-year proposed action. Among other things, I would remind you of my earlier observation that the Ruffed Grouse Society seems to have more standing than other groups, and that this is an obvious conflict of interest, since it is well known that they receive funding from the USFS. Moreover, the RGS's concerns about young forest habitat are unwarranted. Kentucky has plenty of young forest due to over-harvest of timber, particularly in the form of clear cuts.

My biggest concern is that extensive public feedback has been entirely discarded from the proposal as it currently stands. As recently as 2024, we had arrived at a workable compromise, "Alternative 1." I wrote in support of that alternative, and I continue to support that option. Alternative 1 had a much more reasonable timeline (a 40-year plan=40 years of exploitation in which residents have zero say). The reduction in acreage targeted for clear cut also made much more sense.

Moreover, the inclusion of any form of clear cut does not account for real concerns over the potential for landslides and other environmental catastrophes. Reverting to the original plan sets our region up for devastation and continued distress. I was in Knott County during the 2022 floods. I have seen first-hand what that looks like. I have been told that it was the training echoes, the type of storms that caused the floods, not deforestation, that were responsible for most of the damage. There may be some truth in that. But more mudslides could have been prevented had there been more stands of older trees with extensive root systems. Moreover, the proposal does nothing to provide adequate habitat for species such as the Cerulean Warbler or the Cumberland Darter. Finally, the proposal still fails to fully address concerns about invasive species such as Tree of Heaven and the Spotted Lanternfly.

The citizens of Whitley and McCreary Counties are willing to work with you. Let's go back to Alternative 1 and build a viable plan that accounts for the needs of our entire region, not just one or two special interest groups.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Laura Dennis
Williamsburg, KY