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First name: Renee

Last name: Yetter

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comment: I am filing this Notice of Objection pursuant to Title 36 CFR Part 218, regarding the Jellico Vegetation Management Project in the Stearns Ranger District of the Daniel Boone National Forest. The responsible official is Kyle Edmunds, District Ranger.

I support the mission of the Forest Service to use public lands to meet demands for timber, provide opportunities for recreation, and sustain the health of our natural systems, but as a Whitley County resident, taxpayer, and university educator, I wish to re-state my objections to the proposed action, consistent with my prior comments:

1.The scope of the proposed action would create extensive areas that are unnatural, unsightly, and that would not host a biodiversity representative of more complex, resilient natural systems, both in nature and quality.

2.The clearcutting, as proposed, would create larger and more widespread impacts than most natural disturbances would, both above and below ground. The vast biological network created by extensive/growing root systems (soil microbial diversity, including mycorrhizae, etc.), does not appear to have been given any consideration. These are surely hard to measure and assess, but they likely contribute to overall forest health and the ability of areas to recover from extensive disruption. Treatments with herbicides post-harvest may further damage these networks.

3.Though sensitive species have been taken into consideration (Biological Evaluation; Mezmeier & Taylor, April 2024) it is not clear how non-threatened species, game species, etc. were ranked in importance during the decision-making process. Members of the community should have this information so they can weigh the benefits vs. costs of the projected outcomes of the Proposed Action.

4.From an educational standpoint, the area we currently use to teach and train future biologists would become far less available and accessible, except as an example of how heavy manipulation can damage a landscape, at least in the foreseeable timeframe.

5.The local community would bear most of the consequences of the proposed action in terms of aesthetics, noise, disruption, etc. while those making these decisions would not. If contracts are awarded to non-local logging companies, they, too, would impact an area they do not live in. The concerns of area residents about their property values matter.

6.The landscape still bears scars from previous harvesting of natural resources. As companies failed to reclaim sites as promised, members of the community now have low confidence that their worries will be taken seriously, and rightfully so.

7.When Alternative 1 was drafted and presented for public comment, the Forest Service created a unique opportunity to implement a meaningful, impactful partnership between the Forest Service and members of the local community. Many residents felt heard and valued because of this effort. Their comments and responses were often brief and not based on the science behind the proposed action, but did express genuine concern about how it would affect their daily lives (noise produced by logging trucks and the harvesting process, increased traffic on smaller roads, the potential for erosion, landslides, stream-fouling due to sediment, and yes, the aesthetic impacts).

8.In the Decision Notice published in January 2026, the responses of community members are summarized as "private landowners with property adjacent to or within sight of NFS land in the Jellico area expressed fear,

disgust, and outrage at the possibility that their private view of the mountain might be altered." This characterization is unnecessarily demeaning, but also misrepresents the scope and nature of the input.

8. Some of the comments in support of the Proposed Action came from organizations far from Whitley and McCreary Counties, but the vast majority expressed opposition, and Alternative 1 appears to have been entirely dismissed, to the disappointment of many of us.

I urge the Forest Service to reconsider its plan to move forward with the Proposed Action as described in the Decision Notice published January 2026, and instead adopt Alternative 1. The decision in favor of the Proposed Action may be lawful, but it does not come with the support or good will of much of the local community. Choosing to go with the alternative that accommodates the wishes of area residents would, I believe, help restore confidence in those entrusted with stewarding our natural resources, rather than create an adversarial relationship that causes grief and mistrust in everyone.

Respectfully,
Renee B. Yetter, Ph.D.