

File Code: 1950, 1560, 2470
Date: October 20, 2022

Dear Interested Party,

The Stearns Ranger District of the Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF) is inviting you to comment on the Jellico Vegetation Management Project (Jellico Project). You are receiving this letter because you have requested to be notified of activities proposed on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The following information is provided to allow you an opportunity to review and comment on this proposal. Instructions on how to comment are in this document under “How to Comment.”

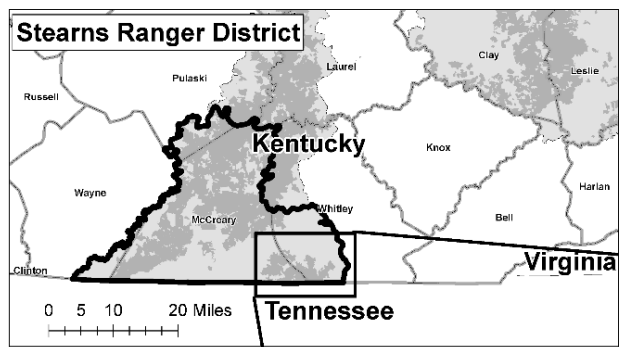
The Jellico Project area is in McCreary and Whitley counties, Kentucky, along Kentucky’s southern border with Tennessee (Figure 1). More specifically, it consists of the NFS lands located south of Kentucky Highway 92 and between Interstate 75 and US Highway 27.

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION: WHY CONSIDER TAKING ANY ACTION?

Overall, the Jellico area is transitioning to mature (81 years and older) forest. Data indicate approximately 72 percent of the project area is mature forest which typically exhibits a closed canopy with an understory and/or midstory layer. Under the current management trajectory, apart from some small (less than 10 acres), isolated areas, the entirety of the area is trending towards mature forest (Figure 2). While desired structures, species compositions, and age classes occur in mature forest, the biodiversity provided by young (0-30 years old) and mid-aged (31-80 years old) forest is being lost.

To counteract this loss and increase project area biodiversity by providing a mix of habitat for flora and fauna, action needs to be taken to adjust conditions such that all desired age classes, structures, and species compositions are represented across the area (Figure 3). Accordingly, the purpose of and need for this project is to meet the Forest’s goals for management as defined in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Daniel Boone National Forest (2004 Forest Plan).

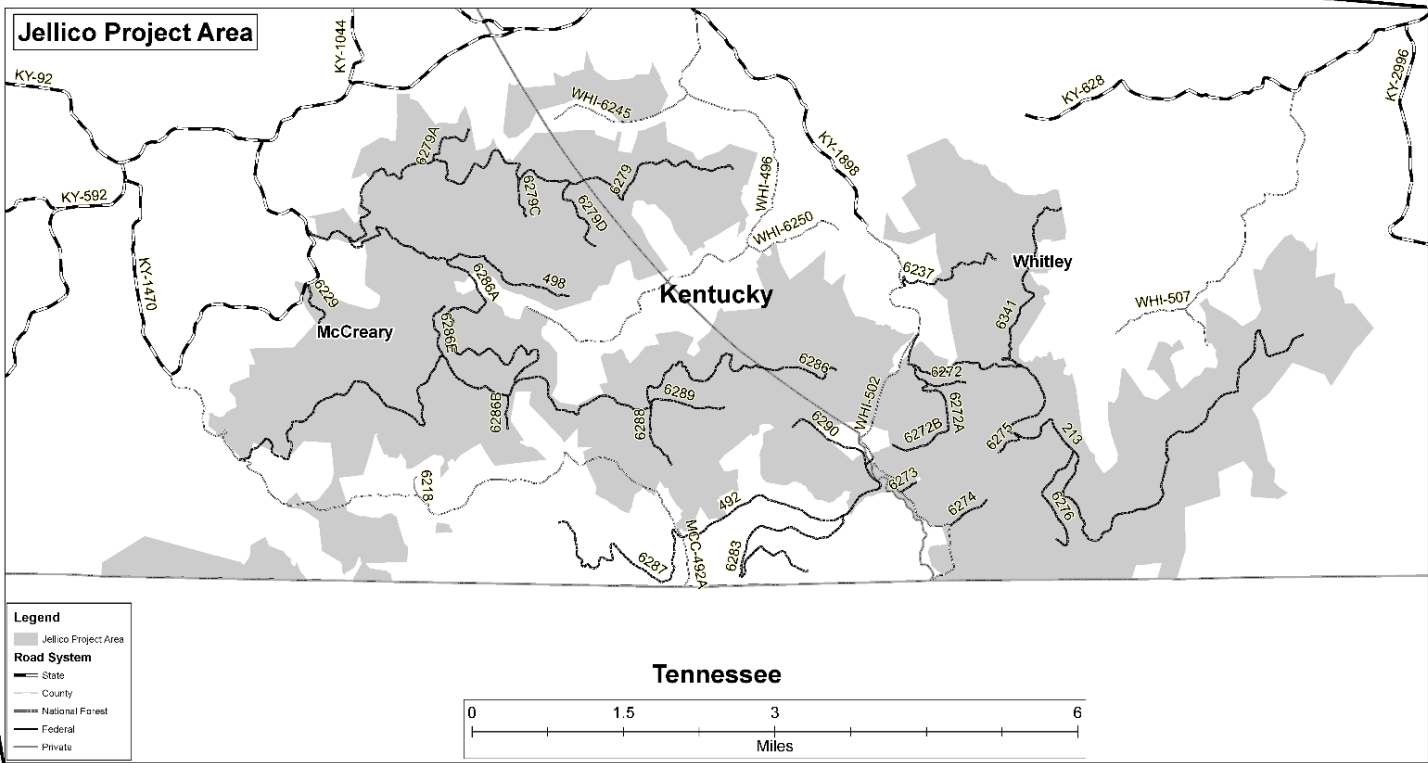




Jellico Project Area Location 10-2022



- Stearns Ranger District
- KY Counties
- NF Land
- Forest Boundary



- Jellico Project Area
- Road System**
- State
- County
- National Forest
- Federal
- Private

This map shows the location of the Jellico Project Area. It is not intended to be used as a legal boundary. The Forest Service reserves the right to update this map as more information becomes available. For more information, please contact the Jellico Project Area at 606-688-1000.

Figure 1: Jellico Project Area Location



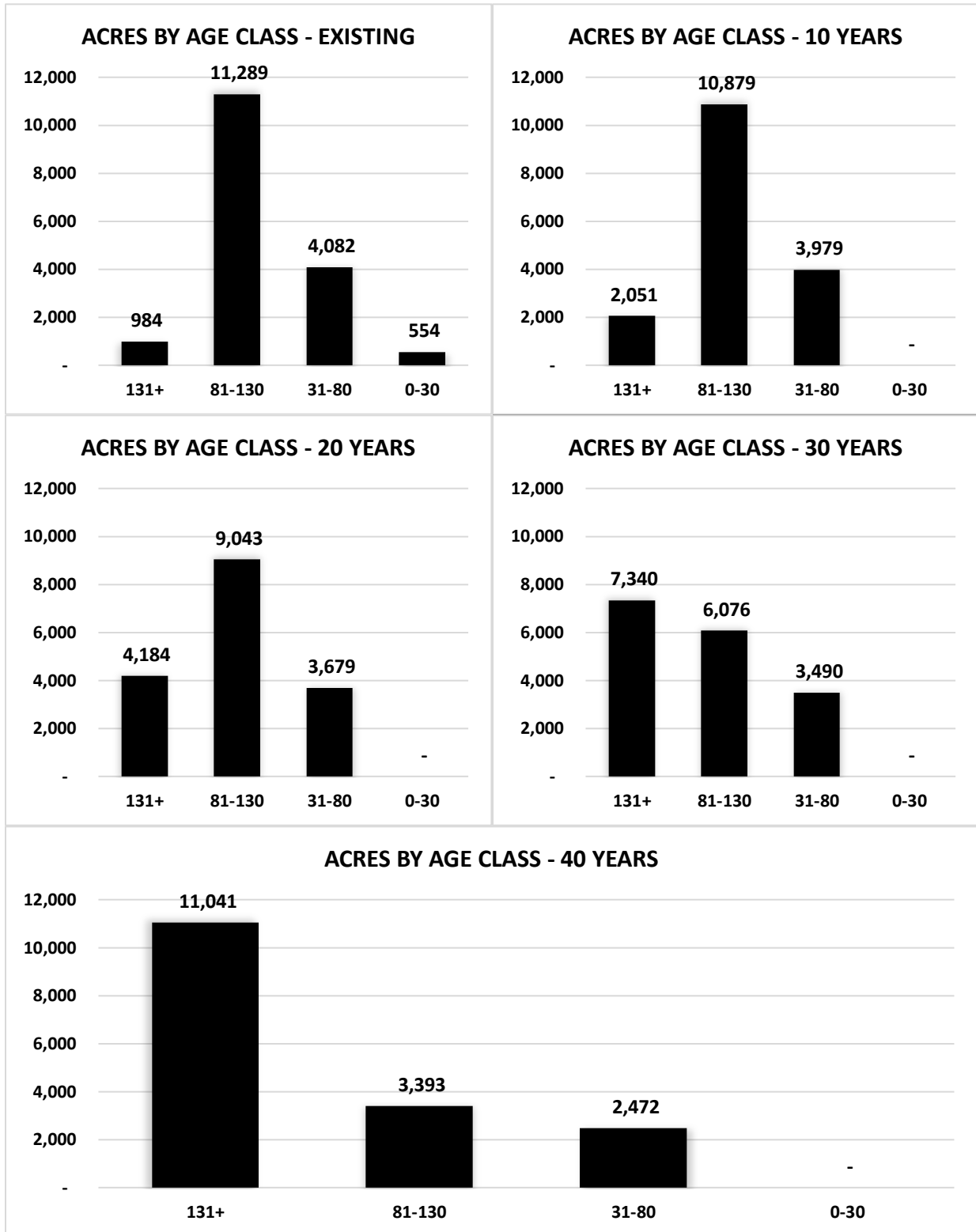


Figure 2: Estimated Trajectory of Forest Age Classes After 40 Years Without Proposed Action Implementation



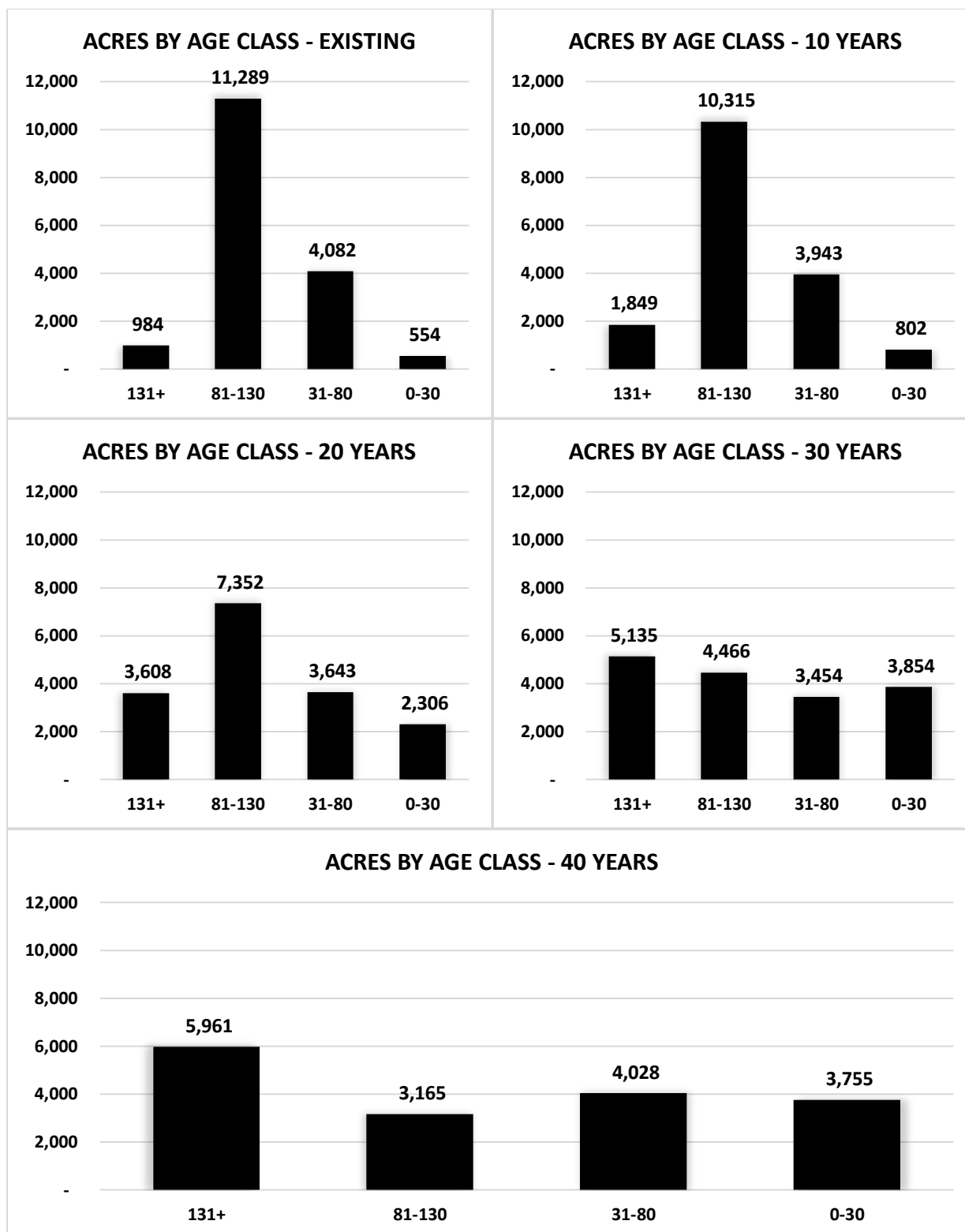


Figure 3: Estimated Trajectory of Forest Age Classes Before, During, and After Proposed Action Implementation

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action consists of silvicultural treatments and road work that would be implemented over the next 40 years, or from approximately 2023 to 2063. Silvicultural treatments would occur across 256 stands encompassing approximately 9,800 acres (Appendix 1 – Maps). Road work would occur on National Forest System roads within the project area. A detailed description of treatments and where they would occur can be found in Appendix 2 – Treatment Descriptions.

Implementation of this project would create approximately 3,700 acres of young, even-aged forest, 1,600 acres of mid age, even-aged forest, 3,500 acres of mid age, two-aged forest, and 1,000 acres of mature, two-aged forest at project completion. The result would be the addition of approximately four 10-year age classes and at least 3 new forest structures across the project area, creating a more balanced age and structure distribution (Appendix 3 – Estimated Acres Per Age Class and Structure). This would bring the project area closer to the desired future condition of a 170-year rotation comprised of seventeen 10-year age classes, each containing around 800-1,000 acres (Forest Plan Objective 1.K-1.A, page 3-35), while simultaneously achieving a variety of other goals and objectives.

The activities being proposed include:

TIMBER HARVESTS

- Clearcut
- Two-aged shelterwood
- Deferment harvest
- Thinning
- Salvage

Harvests would be accomplished using ground-based equipment (e.g., skidders, dozers, cable yarders, tractors, knuckle booms, log trucks) and, where economically possible and appropriate, alternative methods such as cable, tethered, or helicopter logging. Log landings and temporary roads for hauling timber would be constructed, as needed, to access areas where roads do not currently exist. Temporary roads would be constructed primarily within stands specified for treatment in the proposed action. Where that is not possible, temporary roads would be constructed using the shortest viable route to access harvest units. Where temporary roads cross streams, temporary crossings (e.g., culverts, planks, hard surface) would be installed and then removed after harvest. Log landings and temporary roads would be revegetated and returned to forest. Where scenic integrity is of high priority, some temporary roads may be obliterated. No new permanent roads would be constructed; however, some existing roads would be reconstructed.

Thinning would be completed using timber harvests or intermediate treatments (i.e. crop tree release). Where economically feasible, a timber harvest would be employed. Where timber value does not warrant a timber harvest, thinning would be accomplished using an intermediate treatment.

Salvage harvests would only occur when there is a large enough disturbance resulting in enough damage to make the operation economically viable. All salvage harvests would occur within proposed treatment units.



INTERMEDIATE VEGETATION TREATMENTS

- Crop tree release
- Pre- and post-harvest site preparation
- Midstory removal
- Undesirable species removal (e.g. red maple)
- Grape vine control
- Invasive species eradication – native and non-native species

These treatments would be accomplished using herbicides and/or cutting tools such as a chainsaw, machete, brush cutter, masticator, machine-mounted cutter/chainsaw, or some combination thereof.

ROAD WORK

- Road maintenance of existing roads
- Reconstruction of existing roads
- Realignment/relocation of existing roads
- Culvert replacement and installation on existing roads
- Culvert installation and removal on temporary roads
- Temporary stream crossing installation and removal
- Road widening
- Road brushing
 - Manual
 - Mechanical
 - Chemical
- Road ditch line cleaning
- Turnout construction along existing roads
- Road stability improvement/slide repair

These actions would be necessary to implement the various treatments described above and maintain or improve the existing transportation system as needed for project implementation. Not all treatments would require these actions as not all treatments require the use of roads; however, all roads used for timber harvest would receive some level of work to provide suitable conditions for transport. All road work would be compliant with the Forest Plan, Kentucky State BMPs, and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policy.

MAPPED STAND BOUNDARIES (APPENDIX 1) VS. ACTUAL STAND BOUNDARIES

While action locations are mapped in Appendix 1, some variability would occur. The stand boundaries illustrated on the map are approximate and would be adjusted during implementation where needed to reflect actual forest conditions more accurately. This would result primarily in a decrease of acres treated for any given action, especially where Cliffline and Riparian Corridors (Forest Plan, pages 3-5 and 3-9) are detected. It could also result in an increase in acres treated where inaccurate stand boundaries exist. Stand boundaries are deemed inaccurate when physical stand conditions, natural or manmade landforms, or other physical features do not match stand boundaries as currently delineated in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). In such cases, stand boundaries would be adjusted by using a GPS unit to collect field data which would then

be used to update the parent stand layer in GIS. Next, project maps would be updated with new stand boundaries and actions carried out accordingly. Net fluctuation of project acres from stand boundary adjustments is expected to be less than 10 percent.

Example: Stand A is being delineated for harvest. Stand A is 120 years old and shares a boundary with Stand B that is 40 years old. The shared stand boundary as mapped encompasses 5 acres of Stand B. The shared boundary is corrected using a GPS to reflect the actual stand boundary thereby removing 5 acres from Stand A and adding 5 acres to Stand B. The opposite could also be true.

DECISION TO BE MADE AND RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

Tim Reed, the District Ranger of the Stearns Ranger District, Daniel Boone National Forest is the Responsible Official for this proposal. The Responsible Official will decide whether to implement the proposed action.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping for this project includes public notification of the proposal and a review of the management direction for the area in the Forest Plan, review of the National Forest Management Act, and consultations with Forest Service and other agency resource specialists. This letter is also being distributed to individuals and groups who have requested to be notified of new project proposals. Planning documents can be found on the Forest Service web site at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/dbnf/landmanagement/projects>

You can help in the planning process by sharing any concerns or information you may have about this proposal. The Forest Service will use your comments to help determine the appropriate scope of environmental analysis to conduct. Comments submitted will become part of the public record.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the submission will be returned, and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS

Please review the proposed project and submit your site-specific comments, as described below, for consideration in our analysis for the project. Comments in response to this proposal should focus on 1) the proposal; 2) issues or impacts from the proposal; and 3) possible alternatives for addressing issues associated with the proposal that would still meet the specific needs identified. We are especially interested in information that might identify a specific undesired result of implementing the proposed actions. Please submit your comments no later than 45 calendar days from the date of this letter.

Comments can be submitted electronically by email to: SM.FS.r8dbstecom@usda.gov or on the project website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63037>

Please provide the following information as part of your comments:

- I. Name, address, phone number, email address, and organization (if applicable);
- II. Title of the Project: Jellico Vegetation Management Project;
- III. Specific facts and relevant rationale you feel should be considered, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
- IV. Signature or other verification of identity upon request.

Comments can be mailed or delivered in person to:

District Ranger
Daniel Boone National Forest
Stearns Ranger District
3320 Highway 27 N
Whitley City, KY 42653

Written comments can be sent by facsimile to 606-376-3734.

For submitting oral comments by telephone, call 606-376-5323 and identify the purpose of your call. The receptionist will connect you with someone who will document your comments.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on the project, please contact John Hull at john.hull@usda.gov or by calling 606-376-5323.

Sincerely,

X



Signed by: Department of Agriculture

TIMOTHY REED
District Ranger

Enclosures (3)