

RE: Sandwich Vegetation Management Project, Carroll County, New Hampshire

ATTN Responsible Official:  
Jim Innes, District Ranger,  
Saco Ranger District,  
White Mountain National Forest

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to follow-up on my previous comment period letter, to voice protest to the proposed "Vegetation Management Project " in the Sandwich Range of the White Mountain National Forest.

It amazes me that Forest Service personnel could look at the overwhelming volume of testimony against the plan and find "no significant impact". There are many specific impacts noted previously, but I would like to focus my comments on the "big picture" of the ecological impact of these cuts to the White Mountain National Forest ecosystem, as stated before. These concerns have not been addressed.

The proposed timber harvest plans are completely out of step with the needs of our changing world and the wishes of the current administration and its directives for forest service management, which advocates saving mature forests such as these, to allow them to become old-growth.

What these findings apparently overlook is the fact that this area of forest is a complete, highly efficient ecosystem that has taken decades to mature to its current condition. This will be irreversibly damaged by the introduction of heavy equipment and removal of trees. The proposed Vegetation Management Plan will change the character and ecological value of the area permanently, in ways that may have serious environmental consequences, specifically the sequestration of carbon as a remedy to global warming. With the world today in environmental crisis this harvest is simply not worth the ecological cost.

In December 2023, President Joe Biden's administration proposed to END commercially driven logging of old-growth trees in National Forests and preserve and maintain the most carbon-rich elements of U.S. forests in an era of climate change.\*

"Forest ecosystems are an important component of the global carbon (C) cycle. Recent research has indicated that large trees in general, and old-growth forests in particular, sequester substantial amounts of C annually.\*\*

"Carbon makes up about roughly half of the dry weight of wood, but it is also in the soils. As trees get older, they absorb more carbon every year, and because they are bigger they store more carbon.\*\*\*

The major considerations in evaluating this plan should not be about the value of the trees harvested, the desirability of one tree type or forest area over another, or the ease of accessing an area. Rather it should be about the disruption of an ecosystem, the loss of valuable habitat

for biodiversity, the reduction of the forest's ability to sequester carbon, and the irreplaceable loss of potential for creating true old-growth forest.

Every aspect of the forest ecosystem would be negatively impacted by the proposed timber harvest, from the soils and water hydrology to the ground temperatures and air circulation, and all that lives there.

Even before cutting begins, the movement of heavy equipment in the forest destroys the living environment of the soil, the roots, microbes, fungi, insects, reptiles, undergrowth and small animal habitat that reside there.

The importance of the soil - the ground itself - cannot be overstated. "In fact there are forests where there's more carbon in the soils than there is in the standing trees." \*\*

We need to retain mature forest to allow it to become a true old growth forest, a living, breathing ecosystem that is essential for health and the health of the planet.

The spiritual and aesthetic benefit of the forest to all of us who go there also cannot be overstated. We need the woods for recreation, contemplation, exploration or salvation. We value and care for all the life that lives there and we will mourn the loss and destruction that harvesting causes for the rest of our lives, if this cutting is allowed to proceed.

On behalf of the forest and all of us who benefit from it, I beg you to please halt or restrict the proposed Management Plan and leave the Forest alone.

Sincerely,



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\*From fs.usda.gov. website

\*\*e360.yale.edu.