USDA Forest Service, c/o Christopher Mattrick, District Ranger 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, VT 05767, submitted in

**Re: Telephone Gap IRP #60192**

Dear Mr. Mattrick,

I am an enrolled citizen of the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi, headquartered in Swanton, VT. I reside in West Hartford in the White River watershed. I am writing in response to the comment period for the proposed logging in the Telephone Gap area of the Green Mountain National Forest. Please see my previous comment letter of 1-31-24. **I also endorse the comments of the Abenaki Nation Coalition, in their letter and Petition dated 12-5-24, and submitted by John Moody.** The following constitutes my additional comments on the proposed activities noting that my previous comments have, so far, been ignored:

**No Action Alternative:**

We insist the no action alternative is the on ethical and appropriate choice at Telephone Gap.

**Free, Prior and Informed Consent:**

In September of 2007, the United Nations passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada endorsed the declaration in the spring of 2010, and the United States followed suit in December 2010. Six articles of this declaration outline a baseline of universally accepted, best practices concerning burial grounds, sacred and traditional sites, historic sites, repatriation, and curation of indigenous peoples’ remains and artifacts as well as the many issues of access to, use, and protection of these places. At the heart of this declaration is the demand that the policies and practices, which resulted in indigenous peoples “cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs” must be stopped and redressed “through effective mechanisms” (UNDRIP Article 11 (see Appendix 2)).

Many aspects of these basic tenets were part of the best relationship between the newcomers and the Abenaki and other indigenous peoples in northern New York and New England and southern Quebec from the 18 to mid-19 centuries. Hidden though these practices were they helped protect numerous burial grounds, sacred sites, and eventually, whole village and subsistence grounds, unique ecologies, ridgelines, mountains, and mountain ranges. They also protected a substantial, if little known, surviving population of Abenaki and many other indigenous peoples who had sought refuge here from the genocidal Indian wars of the 17 to 19 centuries.

I personally know Abenaki traditional families in Vermont who are keepers of traditional Abenaki cultural practices and language, and whose families have passed these practices down for generations to them. **I personally know and have seen that there are rock cairns used for burials, home sites and navigational markers in the Green Mountain National Forests and State Parks in Vermont, including Telephone Gap/Michigan and Rochester Cairns/Bingo Brook areas that require protection.** In addition, there are springs used by medicine gatherers/healers and traditional gathering areas that require protection, as well as traditional subsistence and gathering areas including areas of concern which stretch from Deer Leap to Camels Hump.

Our Traditional Ecological Knowledge is required if we are to protect the Green Mountains and these ancient sites from destruction. **The Abenaki Peoples must be at the table with the Forest Service and the State to prevent this logging**. The State of Vermont recognizes that 94% of the land in Vermont is privately owned. Therefore, only 6% are National Forest and State owned lands. In Vermont, only 1% of our forested lands are determined to be old growth forests. This is the lowest percentage of all the New England states.

**Coalition Support:**

I support the comments that are to be submitted by our non-native ally Standing Trees and their scientists that confirm the science behind the

Thank you for the opportunity to comment of this proposal. I want to also encourage you to not ignore us, but to work with Vermont’s Abenaki and other tribal peoples in Vermont for assistance in managing our public forests. I look forward to your reply.

 Wliwni!

Earl Hatley