

32 South St  
Middlebury, VT 05753

January 17, 2025

Christopher Mattrick, District Ranger  
Green Mountain National Forest  
Rochester Ranger District

Dear Mr. Mattrick,

As a retired physicist and Mechanical Engineering professor who has moved to Vermont partly because of the exemplary stewardship of the natural environment, I am trying one more time to get the Forest Service to reconsider the planned logging in the Green Mountain National Forest. The deadline to comment on the Telephone Gap project is today, so that is top of mind, but there are others in the queue, including the project on the Worcester Range.

Yesterday, I attended an excellent talk on wildlife conservation given by John Austin, Director of Wildlife for VT Fish and Wildlife. He shared a map that showed that the vast majority of forest in Vermont is on private land. Although we can incent landowners to conserve their forest, we cannot require them to forego logging. In my mind, this places a priority on conserving the public land in Vermont. We just have to look across the border to the state of New York, which set a fantastic example over 100 years ago by establishing the constitutionally protected Forever Wild Forest Preserves of the Adirondack Park. How embarrassing to let them get ahead of us!

I've sat through hours of talks about the negative effects of climate change, development, invasive species, etc. These are huge challenges, and I support any Forest Service efforts to use a science-based approach to experiment with various risk mitigation strategies. If I thought that science was driving the Telephone Gap project, I would be all for it. But I know that, instead, the Telephone Gap project is being driven by the desire to generate revenue by harvesting the timber. The environmental concerns—creation of new habitat, climate change—are being brought up only in a secondary sense to justify the logging. Because of the revenue generated by logging, it is impossible not to be concerned about the conflict of interest.

My proposal is to leave the Green Mountain Forest in its natural state (Alternative A in the Telephone Gap draft decision notice) maintaining the trails so citizens can enjoy it. In a science-based approach, this is the "control." Experiments with selective logging or clear cutting on private land can then be compared to the control to see if they have advantages

or disadvantages with respect to wildlife conservation. We can't count on private land to be the control.

I question the statement in the draft decision that Alternative C has made substantive changes—reducing acres of harvesting and reducing miles of road construction—compared to Alternative B (the original proposal). I submit that the reduction of acres from 8404 to 7743 (only 8%) and the reduction of miles of road construction is insignificant. I saw that Alternative C will result in the harvest of 49,721 hundred million cubic feet of lumber. If the cubic feet of lumber to be harvested dropped significantly from that expected for Alternative B, I might agree that some accommodation has been made, but I don't see that comparison in the report.

Finally, since I expect Alternative C to go forward despite my objections, I would like to see a lot more detail regarding the supervision of the non-forest service personnel who will be doing the harvesting. Who will be accountable for making sure that the detailed treatments described in the document are carried out? In a previous project—clearcutting near the Chittendon Brook Trailhead—the required 100-foot buffer from Rte. 73 was not maintained, leaving a highly visible scar on the landscape. When I inquired why, the explanation was that the logger decided that the tall trees next to Rte. 73 were in danger of falling on the road and needed to be removed. I would have hoped that that decision would have been made by someone who didn't stand to financially benefit from the outcome.

I have been impressed with the professionalism of the Forest Service staff I have met and I understand that you are operating under a plan that is sorely in need of updating. Perhaps the engagement of Vermont citizens can help speed that process.

Sincerely,  
Alice E. White, PhD

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