

On Mar 22, 2024, at 3:47 PM, STEVEN MCLEOD <sbmcvt@aol.com> wrote:

To: Green Mt Forest Service

From: Steve McLeod

As former Executive Director of Vermont Traditions Coalition (2001-2016) and a life long Vermonter, I strongly support the Forest Service's Preferred Alternative B re the Telephone Gap proposal.

I am also submitting the comments below in behalf of the Champion Lands Leaseholders and Traditional Interests Association (CLLTIA) of which I am President. CLLTIA is a 24 year old Vermont organization in support of multiple uses of public lands, and opposed to restrictive 'wilderness' designations.

As Executive Director of Vermont Traditions Coalition, I was heavily involved in all stages of public participation and public debate leading up to the creation of the 2006 Green Mountain Forest Plan.

Vermonters opposed to any more federally designated federal "wilderness" dominated the input both in numbers and in the substance of their Comments. There were thousands of one line Comments by non-Vermonters recruited by national environmental groups calling for more "wilderness" but offering no further substance. These one-line folks have probably never been to the GMF, and will probably never go there.

The final 2006 Plan was a compromise re "wilderness", but also included an aggressive Timber Management Plan which has nowhere near being met. The Forest Service's Telephone Gap proposal at least partly carries out the Timber Goals of the 2006 Plan. Environmental zealots now are trying to re-litigate the 2006 Plan and nullify so much of the public input that went into it by opposing Preferred Alternative B. They now want to re-compromise the 2006 compromise in the name of climate change.

The opponents of Alternate B are in love with the concept of old growth even though there is no environmental basis for their love affair. Young, diverse, and healthy forests created by timber management store carbon at a faster rate than predominant old growth forests. The wood products the timber harvests eventually become also store carbon. Plus, the opponents of Alternate ignore the fact that 13000 of the 35000 acre Telephone Gap proposal will not be part of the harvest process due steep slopes, wetlands, etc. thereby becoming de-facto 'wilderness'.

The argument that environmentally essential logging operations require fossil fuels and therefore should be abandoned is ridiculous. If timber harvesting must be reduced or eliminated on this basis, then the only fair policy is to abandon the thousands of studies on the environment, wildlife, and fish all over the world that consume large amounts of fossil fuels for transportation, large boats, etc. Plus, timber harvesting and creating wood products locally requires much less fossil

fuel usage than importing these products from all over the world.

Speaking of wildlife, it is scientifically well established that the diverse, healthy forests that timber management creates produces healthier, more abundant wildlife and song birds. Managed forests are a boon to both game and non- game species. Many studies have established that many popular bird species are declining at a dangerous rate due to the lack of early successional habitat that timber management creates. The same is true for mammals.

The Telephone Gap proposal has taken so long to develop because of the rigorous and painstaking scientific and administrative processes that are prerequisites for federal lands timber harvests. It is past time for actual harvesting occurs so that the land and wildlife can reap the benefits timber harvests create.

While this Comment has focused on the forest and wildlife benefits of the Telephone Gap proposal, it is important to also remember that the National Forest statutes require a multi- purpose use of the National Forests that includes timber harvesting for the benefit of rural vitality, rural economy, and rural recreation as well as improved public access.

Rural pursuits such as hunting and bird watching suffer if there is no game to hunt and no birds to watch.

In summary , cutting back on the Telephone Gap timber management proposal creates environmental destruction, not environmental protection.