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First name: Jeff

Last name: Nugent

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Somerset Integrated Resource Project. The amount of information you've made available to the public through documents, meetings, and in answering questions from email is impressive.

Please consider leaving a few red pines in Somerset in the proposed upland openings for variety; they're interesting trees and reflective of the reforestation efforts throughout the northeast during the first half of the 20th century.

The Early Successional Habitat Creation Project document notes that current logging equipment is capable of skidding harvested timber one-quarter mile. A number of stands proposed for vegetation treatment are farther than one-quarter mile from an existing road or trail, or from a new temporary road. Some are much farther. For example, the stands southeast of Grout Pond are over a mile from the nearest landing. It seems like more temporary roads would be needed than are noted in the IRP document or maps. This should be addressed.

If skidding is done from these stands up to the landing in Stand 12, perhaps improvements to the East Loop (or a re-route of the East Loop), could result. This trail is very wet and at times unpleasant for skiing and hiking.

There are at least two locations where a "non-system woods road/trail" may be on an old logging railroad grade (possibly Compartment 108, Stand 104, and probably Compartment 102, Stand 17 & 18). If these logging railroad grades are relatively undisturbed, please try and avoid disturbing them further. If they have been used for hauling or by vehicles, please try and not alter the roadbed significantly. The document notes that temporary roads can be up to 14 feet wide. Making a road that wide would essentially destroy any semblance of a railroad grade. These early twentieth century old logging railroad grades are historical evidence of past land uses, and if they are to some extent in their original state, should be preserved. (There are other old logging railroad grades in the Somerset IRP area, but I believe they have been significantly altered. If not, please consider leaving these undisturbed as well.)

The area around the two above-mentioned railroad grades are the locations, respectively, of the Tudor homestead and worker camps for the construction of Somerset Dam. In addition, where the proposed haul road at the end of FR 326 approaches the Rake Branch was in the area of Camp 1 from the logging era. Some sort of archeological investigation should be done in these areas before road building and harvesting starts.

Logging is proposed for Compartment 105, Stand 1. The East Branch Trail, which is also the route of the Catamount Trail, passes through this stand. For more than four miles from Somerset Dam south to the bridges where the East Branch Trail turns west to Somerset Road, this trail has no human intrusions (other than old railroad grades and markings of the USFS boundary). This stand is near the middle of this trail segment. Any logging activity should reflect the feeling of remoteness, perhaps by placing a large buffer strip along the trail. The forest on the ridge west of the narrow wetland complex contains some stately spruce trees-not old growth but in my opinion a forest that seems more grand than many others I've seen in the area. This area is small, it's in steep terrain, and near the wetland; I believe it's not unreasonable to ask that it be excluded from logging. It's circled in red in an attached image.

The use of the Binney Brook Trail for hauling should be an opportunity to improve the tread of this very popular hiking trail. It is eroded in places and the gravel and stone used make walking on this trail unpleasant. I hope improvements can be made. The Deerfield Ridge Trail to Haystack Mountain is very muddy and eroded in places and could use some work, and could also use blazing and signage.

At Grout Pond, while I support charging a fee for camping, the existing "fee area" signs can imply that the entire area-picnic grounds, pond, and trails-requires a fee to use. I think these signs are misleading (I'm assuming no fees are proposed for day use, and so the "area" really doesn't require a fee, just one activity-camping-does), and could potentially discourage people from using the area. Please consider more appropriate signage indicating only camping requires a fee.

At Grout Pond, the Pond Trail should be clearly signed at both the picnic area, and at the group camping area.

At Grout Pond, hardening of campsites is proposed. Tent camping on gravel can be uncomfortable and it can be difficult to erect a tent because stakes either can't easily be put into the ground, or don't stay put. Please consider this when hardening campsites if no tent platforms are available.

At Grout Pond, when people are walking the east part of the Pond Trail and first approach the pond, they may be tempted to wander through sites 1 and 2 to access the pond, potentially disrupting campers' privacy. If there is no view/access to the pond directly from the trail in this area, perhaps consider a short spur when this trail first approaches the pond to provide a view. Since this trail is proposed to be accessible, this would mean people wouldn't have to travel as far to access the pond.