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First name: Randy

Last name: Elles

Organization: First Stop Board Barn

Title: Brand Director

Comments: To whom it may concern:

As a local business owner, avid skier, snowboarder, biker, hiker, paddler, and photographer I'm writing in support of the Vermont Huts Association's application for a special use permit in the proposed action for the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project to construct, operate, and maintain a four-season hut within the footprint of the former lodge that was destroyed by fire near South Pond.

My family owns and operates First Stop Board Barn, an outdoor gear shop in Killington, Vermont. We believe access to this region would support responsible year-around recreation tourism growth. We currently employ 15 people during the winter months and 8 people during the summer months and our goal would be to eventually offer year-around employment for our entire staff. During the winter months we specialize in ski, snowboard, cross-country, and snowshoe gear. During the warmer months we specialize in all types of bikes, paddle boards, kayaks, and hiking gear. I have used the Chittenden Brook Hut and many of the trails in the region and believe there is a huge opportunity to welcome new visitors to Vermont who seek to explore the outdoors while also improving the accessibility for locals alike.

A hut in this location takes advantage of existing infrastructure and is ideally situated to host users of the trails mentioned below, creating a new point of access to the outdoors for trail users of all ages and abilities.

Additionally, I support the USDA Forest Service's proposal to create 34.9 miles of trail through new construction, relocation, and designation for mountain biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing will greatly enhance the ability of the public to enjoy this incredible public resource that is the Green Mountain National Forest.

These projects will provide critical trail connectivity for both the Velomont Trail and Catamount Trail and service numerous user groups. As cross-country skiing and snowshoeing has grown over the past 3 season we've had several inquiries about the Catamount Trail and other trails in the area. We have also had a ton of excitement with the continued development of the Velemont Trail for mountain biking which would connect Killington to Stowe. The new mountain bike trails have been a vital asset for locals and are now attracting riders from across the northeast. These cyclists typically bring a friend or their family use our hotels, dine at our restaurants, and support our local bike shops.

I also support the addition of 3.1 miles of existing Long Trail to the National Forest Trail System as part of the pending South Pond acquisition. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,

Randy, Bill, Coral, and Max Elles

First Stop Board Barn

Killington's favorite mom & pop ski, snowboard, bike, and paddle shop since 1979.

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