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Comments: My letter is attached as a PDF.

Hello, good comment reviewers for the Forest Service.

As a Vermonter, a U.S. citizen, and an Earthling, I am concerned that the Telephone Gap Project is based on dangerously outdated forest ecology. Since the codification of the 2006 USFS GMNF Forest Plan, forest science has been filling in a lot of gaps in our knowledge about the more-than-human world -- and how we might partner with it.

From the perspective of emerging findings, this Project proposes to cut old growth forest that's essential to our collective response to climate change. It undermines carbon sequestration of both trees and mycelial networks for at least the next couple decades -- which is time we don't have. This is just one reason expert after expert says, Don't cut the old growth; we need especially to save the elder hub trees!

In positive terms, GMNF has a chance to lead, to implement policies that reflect the newly emerging ecological paradigm (see Simard on clear cutting and Law on when forests are carbon sinks vs. sources). In starker terms, as the deciders here, you have a responsibility to exercise precaution on behalf of us all, to break the human pattern of taking irreversible action in ignorance. You also have a responsibility not to trade the "lung tissue of the planet" by means of half-measures that limit adequate environmental protections to satisfy short-term economic interests in "forest products," like wood and maple taps. (From what I understand, in Vermont, private forests more than adequately supply timber.)

Beyond the many watching and pleading in the present, imagine the eyes of future people looking back on you here and now, taking stock of whether you betrayed or acted in light of science and in the larger interests of future life on the planet. The ForestService made the right choice in the case of Willamette National Forest, and should make it here, for the same reasons. (The parallel extends to the threat both logging proposals posed to endangered species -- WNF's northern spotted owl and GMNF's northern long-eared bat.)

The current version of the Telephone Gap Project doesn't pass muster as sustainable by the standards of today's knowledge. Let's do a proper Environmental Assessment of the consequences of this Project in light of the latest forest science, not give a perfunctory green-light to sawing off the limb that's supporting us all.