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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My name is Lopi LaRoe and I am a home owner in Rutland City. I am writing in opposition to a large majority of the proposed Telephone Gap Integrated Project. I will attempt to detail which specific actions I oppose and why from what I have gleaned from the documents provided.

Before I begin with that I wish to share my perspective on the value of living forest ecosystems beyond human use and consumption. The forests on this planet have been plundered and consumed seemingly without concern for future generations of humans and forest creature's well-being. The forests have a voice but one must listen long and carefully in order to hear it. It emanates from deep beneath the topsoil. It speaks in mycelial networks which we have only begun to comprehend in all their complexity. It speaks to those who listen in a rich palette of smells and sound.

10,000 years ago 57% of the world's habitable land was covered by forest. That's 6 billion hectares. Today, only 4 billion hectares are left. The world has lost one-third of its forest - an area twice the size of the United States. Get this, only 10% of this was lost in the first 5000 years. Half of the total forest loss occurred from 8,000 BC to 1900; the other half occurred in the last century alone. This means that the deforestation accelerated over the last century; in just 100 years the world lost as much forest as it had in the previous 9000 years.

I grew up in the Adirondack Mountains but spent a significant part of my life living in California. A place known for old growth redwoods. I have found myself many times wandering through these cathedral like forest groves of ancient trees which included red cedar, ponderosa pines and douglas fir. Many times I fell off the edge of my reverie by being confronted with an abrupt change in the landscape to an area that was clear cut in recent decades or in earlier ones. The change one experiences is heart stopping. So many times I cursed those early loggers who we see old timey photos of posing by their prey like they killed a woolly mammoth and they're so proud of it. They were robbing the future. Did they know it?

My question to you, our friends at the Forest Service. Do you know it? The fact that in your proposed "treatments" our tiny amount of old growth in the state of Vermont is even included is criminal thinking on your part. How short sighted of your team to think we can cut these ancients. Not one single ancient tree should be cut. Not a one. Additionally, none of the so called "mature" trees should hear the sound of a chain saw either. I was involved in a fight in Northern California that lasted for a decade and in the end the activists prevailed and saved what was to become Headwaters Forest Reserve. Some 7,472 acres were saved but it took a full decade of a multi-pronged approach to stop the insanity.

I moved to Vermont in 2018. I remain committed to protecting old growth and mature growth forested ecosystems here as well and will commit acts of civil disobedience if that is required of me. I pledge to make a tree platform my home for as long as it takes, just like Julia Butterfly did those decades ago. Despite nearing my 60th year on the planet, I will do it, you have my word.

In section 2.2, titled Timber Resource, the regional and local economies are mentioned. I say, allow those lands held in private to be utilized in this way by their stewards. These forests are not here to be transformed into dollars to stimulate the local economies. These forests belong to the public and are not to be harvested upon for private gain. I was at a few of the field trips and witnessed at least one local forester go off in an emotional tirade about how his family relied on timber harvest to feed and house his kids. I won't mention names but I think you are well aware of who stands to gain financially for this proposed project. I say to them, find another vocation if this one is not lucrative enough or simplify your lifestyle to need less. Our public lands are not here to support private individual's livelihoods. Look around at the rest of us. We are not demanding the destruction of a public resource in order to survive. Look to privately held lands or find a more sustainable occupation. Period.

Further comment on that section 2.2 is in response to this quote:

"Improvement of timber stands is needed where trees with poor form, quality, structure, and composition are inhibiting the growth potential for healthy forested conditions"

I would remind you that the forest doesn't need to live up to your beauty standards! I think the forest knows better than us how to return to it's highest potential and healthiest forms and humans need to get out of the way to allow

nature to run its course.

Here is where I say No Clear Cuts. Never. I beg of you, just don't do it. I'll allow those more eloquent than I to detail the multitude of reasons against doing so. Again, I remind you of the impending granny tree sit should you try to cut our elders.

Section 3.6 Transportation and Roads. No. Hard no to all new construction of roads. We need roadless areas and since you are going to scrap the majority of the proposed timber harvest, you won't be requiring any new roads. Maintaining existing roads is logical and makes good sense because the roads that are already there should be kept up so that the destruction they required to be built in the first place was not done in vain.

The next section I wish to respond to is 3.4 Recreation. I am in support of improvements to existing trails and adding additional trails for cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking. I am firmly opposed to adding additional miles of ATV trails and would prefer there not be vehicles allowed on trails at all including snowmobiles. I am adamantly and strongly opposed to allowing snowmobiles to access the catamount trail at any point. There is nothing more disturbing to a peaceful winter hike or snowshoe or ski than the gut wrenchingly ear piercing sound of snowmobiles. Please stop it and keep the public peace. We need the quiet and sublime beauty of hearing the snow fall off the tree branches.

I am in support of the Vermont Huts Association's special use permit to construct, operate and maintain a four season hut on the South Pond acquisition so long as it is free and open to the public for use as are the other huts on the Long and Appalachian Trails.

I am also in favor of removing the dam 60 ft from the Blue Ridge Trail east of FR232 in Chittenden. I love the area and would love to see this wetland restored.

I am not in favor of allowing 83 acres of maple tapping on public lands unless it is done with old fashioned methods of buckets because the blue hoses are such an eyesore and really mess up the beauty of the landscape in my opinion! I do love maple syrup but perhaps this can be done on privately stewarded lands instead.

You may be detecting a theme here and that is the age old adage of leave no trace. I really hope and pray that in the end Chris Matric will decide to scrap much of this project. We are on a rapid course towards climate disaster, so much new data has come to light even in the last few years, we need to act accordingly and keep carbon sequestered as much as possible.

One last thing I wish to voice my disagreement with is the use of herbicides to treat the oaks. Perhaps I don't have enough information on this front, admittedly but if it involves glyphosate I am a firm no on that chemical no matter what the justification is. I need more information to determine my position on the Ash borer problem. I will do my homework and revisit this issue later.

In closing I will say that my encounters with the various Forest Rangers has been nothing but polite and professional and I have a lot of respect for you guys. I really hope and pray you take to heart the unprecedented outpouring of opposition to this project and scrap all but the best parts of it.

Thank you for your patience and care and for deeply listening to the voice of your constituents.

Remember, Nature bats last.

sincerely.

Lopi LaRoe

Rutland