

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/14/2023 3:32:33 AM

First name: Andy

Last name: McMillan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern:

Pitting mountain biking trail maintenance challenges against soil and water resource damages when these exciting, sustainable, dispersed forms of low impact recreation pale in comparison to the scope and scale of the earth and ecological disturbance caused by commercial, mechanical logging projects is a bit of a stretch. That said, I do not oppose sustainable forest management for the sake of forest health, carbon sequestration, and habitat and am thus writing in support of the U.S. Forest Services' proposal to provide sustainable recreation opportunities within the Telephone Gap IRP area.

In particular, I support the 34.9 miles of trail construction for mountain biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing. I support projects that provide enhanced trail connectivity and access for various user groups, including those on the Velomont Trail and Catamount Trail. These are excellent examples of sustainable forest management goals that yield local recreation options and tourism opportunities.

The South Pond Land Acquisition warrants careful consideration for its long-term recreational value and opportunities when selecting the appropriate forest management practices in mountainous regions. I encourage the USFS and those working on its behalf to continue to look for and advance additional areas and opportunities for dispersed, low impact recreation within the Telephone Gap IRP area, including additional managed backcountry skiing/splitboarding zones, mountain biking, hiking, and cross country skiing trails, and even rock climbing access opportunities. Where practicable, the USFS should seek to achieve multiple societal benefits with its forest management practices, specifically, those that directly support safe and reasonably efficient backcountry skiing opportunities on east, north, northeast, and northwest facing aspects at and above 2,500' elevation.

The proposed forest management practices, such as but not limited to Prescribed Fire Treatment to Enhance Oak Habitat would create unique opportunities for additional recreational uses, such as skiing in winter. Perhaps prescribed fire treatment practices could be implemented at more than one area within the Telephone Gap IRP to achieve USFS's goals?

The USFS should administer its individual tree selection, group selection, thinning and improvement cutting activities in ways that align with and directly benefit compatible low impact recreational uses, such as but not limited to backcountry skiing/splitboarding and scenic vistas. More specifically, the USFS should, wherever practicable (and the environmental conditions are favorable) perform its planned 11,800 acres of forest management within the Telephone Gap IRP to establish sustainable, native, climax forest structures, such as but not limited to Northern Hardwood and Montane Yellow Birch-Red Spruce Forests.

The USFS should also carefully review and consider all of the proposed logging road and log landings on National Forest Lands for potential additional long-term benefits such as for hiking, cross-country skiing, and even new public access points for dispersed primitive camping and/or parking. The USFS could and should establish additional year-round public access/parking opportunities (beyond that of the 10 car lot on Rockwell Rd). Additional public parking opportunities should be established at key access points, and at locations that offer users a more remote experience, such as along Wildcat Road and Old Turnpike Road where new and/or improved existing public parking lots would allow access to these public lands from population centers to the west, such as Rutland, Brandon, and Pittsford. The South Pond Land Acquisition affords this unique opportunity to create a significant public benefit simply through additional access to outdoor recreation.

With 12.6 miles of logging roads to be enhanced and over 11,000 acres of timber harvest proposed in the Telephone Gap IRP, the opportunities to achieve additional recreational benefits are abundant. USFS should continue to actively pursue and implement these and other additional recreational use and access opportunities with local community partner support.