

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/26/2023 4:00:00 AM

First name: Raphael

Last name: Taylor

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Jim Innes, District Ranger, and others to whom it may concern at the USDA Forest Service,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed Sandwich Vegetation Management Project #57392.

I am in my early 40s, and I have spent portions of each year of my life in the Sandwich Range with my relatives who have been homeowners in the Wonalancet intervale, many of them, for their entire lives. I am aware of the uniquely beautiful and largely undisturbed character of this overall forest-area. I own undeveloped land that abuts the national forest in the area, and I am aware of the overall mission of conservation and sustainable enjoyment that many in the community have worked to realize through their private land-ownership, and their activism in regards to the nearby national forest-land.

As you are surely aware, Wonalancet, Ferncroft, and the sandwich range are an extremely active area for the sustainable enjoyment of the natural forest, via hiking and cross country skiing and similar activities. The enjoyment and experience of nature in this valley has a history that's lasted more than 125 years and has come to have significant positive impacts on the surrounding area, encouraging preservation and providing for beneficial yet sustainable economic activity to the area.

Vegetation Management Project #57392 seems to have been planned in a way that overlooks the inherent positive associations that those who come to the valley to hike and ski have, with matured forest land that is not timbered and logged. The disturbance to hiking/skiing trails and to the scenic views of the mountain range from other heavily-hiked summits does not seem to be worth the disruption this project would cause to the forest.

Another major concern I have relates to climate change and how this project seems to conflict with the current blanket policies of the USDA and the Federal Government. President Biden made an executive order in 2022 on earth day and another one on earth day of 2023, that directed the Forest Service to allow mature forests to grow into old growth forests (see Executive Order, 14072 (2022) USDA press release No. 0087.23 (2023), in light of an increasing awareness of and focus on climate change. In Executive Order 14072 (which I have attached to my letter), President Biden's order states that "Conserving old-growth and mature forests on Federal lands while supporting and advancing climate-smart forestry and sustainable forest products is critical to protecting these and other ecosystem services provided by those forests."

I understand that this vegetation management project comes out of a management plan first drafted in 2005. I am no detailed expert on forestry, but it is unacceptable for a project that has inferior repercussions for the area and the planet to be put in place without appropriately updating the management plan in light of the latest Government and USDA-agency policies and stated goals, and the present-day overall public sentiment about the removal of forests, which will result in more greenhouse gases entering the air. This is an essential component of why I am concerned about and currently oppose Vegetation Management Project #5739.

I am also concerned about the results this project will have on the surrounding ecosystem. With regard to that as well, it seems to be unacceptable to take this rash step of logging significant acreage instead of studying the benefits of leaving that forest intact as habitat for the species that call it home. Not enough consideration of the available alternatives has been undertaken with regard to this plan to log the National Forest. I am raising my concerns in regards to this as a member of the community.

Attachment: Federal Register Executive Order 14072 of April 22,2022. Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities and Local Economies

Sincerely

Raphael Taylor

Wonalancet NH and Brooklyn NY