

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/30/2023 4:00:00 AM

First name: Benedict

Last name: Semmes

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ranger Innes,

Having submitted dozens of thoughtful questions during last year's scoping period and having not a single one of them answered, or addressed in the plan, leaves me no choice but to comment again, now in opposition to the plan.

Please know that I did not start out opposed to this plan. I believe in the need for forest management in New England and the WMNF. I use forest products and recognize the value of forest products to my community. Further, when I am on the Big Rock Cave Trail, I am saddened to see the beech scale disease and its rampant spread. I believe in the introduction of succession for forest health. I also believe that the local hiking groups that steward these trail systems and watershed, some of which I am a member, must work proactively with the WMNF to maintain these places of natural, national, and local pride.

--- Why is there still no plan to protect our trails, pets, and people from negative impacts? No safety assurances among dangerous equipment and heavy traffic? Children play in these woods and on these roads all summer long... Really is there no consideration for shared space and neighbors? No Road Use Agreement with Albany, Tamworth?? --

The careless approach with which the USFS has engaged our effected communities, the lack of attention to local use and knowledge, has destroyed my confidence that any harvest or sustainable management plan implemented in these locations would be carried out professionally or responsibly at this time. Your team has shown no interest in providing the public with any guardrails for any accountability. People are terrified and I don't blame them.

If the service had come forward and shared meaningful information on the public benefits for this action, I would've helped spread that message. Instead, we landowners feel lost in a game of smoke and mirrors with a complete lack of any honest engagement with the service. Reading my neighbors' comments, it is clear to me that the service is close to permanently ruining its reputation with those who for decades have sung its praises.

--- Provide us with sub total estimates per identified area, not just the grand total for the whole harvest! We deserve details on our specific areas of proposed management, not vague grand totals to hide behind[hellip] We deserve to see proposed landing areas. --

I share the great responsibility with my family, and many neighbors, in stewarding our collective woodlots abutting the WMNF. We rely on local silviculturists and foresters to advise us on our decisions. Most folks here, when you really sit down with them understand that management of the forests is not a simple yes or no equation. The people who live in these communities are caring and capable of appreciating the nuances and tradeoffs of managing these woods. We are the descendants, literally and spiritually, of the folks that lived here, formed the clubs that first protected these forests, that built the trails you stand to trash and disrespect. Notably, these were the same people who advocated successfully for the 1911 Weeks Act and creation of the USFS in the first place. These local champions for founding the Forest Service would be appalled at the lack of consideration for the heritage of this range and its people. They had faith in collaboration and communication. Shared values.

However, this plan is bad and outdated. It undermines any trust that we had. I ask that this 2005 plan be thrown out all together and that the people who are tasked with carrying out the management of these forests come back

to the community, meet with us in our grove, or on the trails. Let us share in your knowledge of public benefits; come make your case. It is 2023 and the ecological and social implications of such large land decisions are not the same as they were twenty years ago.

When you are absent from the local discourse you lose all ability to define your narrative and fulfill your public role with dignity. That was your big mistake.

Please come back to the community with the intention to stand by your word, share more details, and ensure the safety of our hiking trails.

STRONGLY OPPOSED.

Benedict Semmes

Wonalancet Farm

Attachment: Images in attachment 2023 BJS WMNF Public Comment

Attachment: 2022 scoping comments in 7.6.2022 BJS Comments on Sandwich Range Vegetation Management plan