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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a member of both the Wonalancet Outdoor Club and the Tamworth Outing

As a member of both the Wonalancet Outdoor Club and the Tamworth Outing Club, as well as a hike leader for the Appalachian Mountain Club and a volunteer trail steward for the USFS in the WMNF, I feel compelled to add my personal statement of concern regarding the proposed "Sandwich Vegetation Management Project."

I share the concerns expressed by the Tamworth Outing Club and others regarding problems with lack of parking and access to trails for hikers, skiers and others during the project period and beyond. Many people frequent this area every day of the week, every season of the year. There is not enough parking there as it is, even with a recent expansion.

In addition, I believe that the importance of protecting the scenic, aesthetic and biological value of undisturbed forest cannot be overstated. This is what most people come to the Ferncroft area to experience. Logging and associated activities not only destroy the forest's serenity in the short-term, they degrade the soil and water quality and compromise the natural beauty of the areas they go through indefinitely. The existing forest roads, fields and natural openings as well as the deep woods that currently exist in this area provide habitat for wildlife that is rich in the native foods that these birds, animals and amphibians thrive on.

The area in the draft Environmental Assessment plan is part of a complete, balanced ecosystem. Without this balance we all lose. Additionally, if the forest is never allowed to grow old, it can never achieve its potential as an antidote to human-inflicted climate change. Visible proof of this can be seen in the attached photos taken from the Rollins Trail looking towards the Bowl Natural Area and Wonalancet Range, dramatically showing the difference between old growth forest and forest that was cut decades previously.

What is the purpose of a Vegetation Management Plan? It appears to be designed as a cover to allow logging operations to have their way. In fact, in areas affected by logging the overall health of the forest will suffer. The ability of the ground to withstand erosion from flooding and torrential rains, which are becoming more and more common with the changing climate, will undoubtedly be compromised and severe degradation of the soil will occur.

Landing yards that I have seen in recent years require a much bigger footprint than those of 2005, due to the huge size of the equipment used. They are covered in a deep layer of wood chips and other waste from logging enterprises. This suppresses natural regrowth and regeneration, depriving animals of food supply for many years. To be returned to its pre-logging condition, existing forest roads and clearings will inevitably require a higher level of remediation than the loggers or Forest Service is planning to provide.

With logging, past experience shows that "undesirable" species such as Beech and bittersweet will take over, unless other measures such as (god forbid) burning or herbicide use to suppress the unwanted species. Such actions should be off-limits for consideration.

The effects of climate change are increasing every year. Rising global temperatures and changing weather patterns are predicted to cause more frequent winter thaw and freeze cycles (as reported by the Mt Washington Observatory), more extreme rainfall and drought, damage by erosion, new diseases, extreme stress on wildlife and air quality alerts. Established forests with mature trees are one of our best defenses against threats of global warming. As a recent headline in the Boston Globe states, "As climate change drives more extreme weather, 'everything we care about is on the line.' We care about our forests, and urge you to do all you can to protect

them.

Healthy forests should be a goal of any vegetation management plan. Clearly, the 2005 Vegetation Management Plan is woefully out of date in regard to best practices for forest health, climate change mitigation, wildlife habitat and recreational use. I urge you to create a new forest management plan to respond to the changing needs of our people and environment before going forward with plans for the harvesting and transporting of trees in the Sandwich Range.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration.

Attachment: Image

Attachment 2: Image