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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Forest Service, USDA

From: Francoise Meissner

Date: October 23, 2023

While I am not opposed to responsible forest management, I am strongly opposed to the proposed Sandwich Vegetation Management Project for many reasons - below are just a few of them:

The project is too large in scope and, despite reassurances from the officials of the Forestry Service to the contrary, I fear that it will be very difficult for them to oversee the day to day activities of the logging companies as they work through this pristine area.

There will be severe disruptions and negative impacts during all seasons on thousands of recreational visitors who come to the area precisely to escape the noise and pollution of more urban areas. Why would anyone decide to hike the Sandwich Range if one knows there is massive logging under way, let alone the prescribed burning of 300+ acres? And restricted parking adding to the problem.

The 30 ft. or 50 ft. buffer zones along existing trails are woefully inadequate - this was my observation on the Forest Service field trip conducted on 9/24/23. UNH Extension's recommendation is that all forestry practices "maintain an uncut or partially cut buffer of 150 feet along recreational trails [hellip]. " [<https://extension.unh.edu/goodforestry/>]. Ref: Page 63 of "Good Forestry in the Granite State (2010)" .

As owner of a farm and 90 acres of farmland on Chinook Trail in Wonalancet at the base of the Sandwich Range, I am concerned about soil erosion and water runoff. A long time resident of Tamworth, Judith Reardon, who has worked on maintaining the trails for years, recalls the Wonalancet log harvest of the 1970s and how the soil was torn up around the trails. She also points out that the logging area grew back as "very dense beech saplings with no marketable-size trees and no oaks" so the goal of promoting the growth of large valuable trees sounds unrealistic.

I am also concerned that the Draft Environmental Assessment seems to have chosen to ignore some important viewpoints which will be impacted by this project - these are clearly shown in the Powerpoint Presentation by Benedict Semmes of Wonalancet, i.e. the views from Mt. Katherine and, especially, from Route 113A driving north from Sandwich. We have frequently noticed travelers stopping here to photograph the iconic Wonalancet Union Chapel with its spectacular backdrop of the Sandwich Range. How will that mountainside look after 415 acres have been cut and 300 acres burned?

It seems that The White Mountain National Forest last revised its management plan in 2005. That is almost 20 years ago so it stands to reason that this plan is outdated.

Therefore, I stand with many others in our community, in asking the Forest Service to cancel this project entirely or at least come up with an updated plan to protect the trails and minimize the disruptions which this project will cause to the residents of Wonalancet and to the thousands of people who currently enjoy the recreational opportunities of the Sandwich Range.

I, respectfully, ask that you please listen to us and act on our concerns!

For your information, one of the attached photographs is of Chinook Trail Farm with the Sandwich Range as our backdrop. How will that mountainside look after your proposed logging project?

Francoise Meissner

Attachment: Picture of Harvest Area Viewshed

Attachment: Picture of Chinook Trail Farm