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First name: Zack

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Jim Innes, District Ranger

USDA Forest Service Saco Ranger District

33 Kancamagus Highway

Conway, NH 03818

Dear Mr. Innes,

Please see attached for a letter from 50 organizations across the US regarding the Sandwich VMP Draft EA.

Dear Mr. Innes,

We are writing to respectfully request that you pause, reevaluate, and remove the mature forest components of the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project in the White Mountain National Forest.

After near-total forest clearing during the 1800s, the forests at the foot of the Sandwich Range have regrown and matured, and many have been unlogged since agricultural abandonment. These healthy, mature forests store vast amounts of carbon, and they will acquire the characteristics of an old-growth forest if allowed to grow older. Recent studies show that unlogged forests in the Northeast will continue to accumulate and store far more carbon than is contained in logged forests or in wood products.

Logging and burning these carbon-dense forests would immediately release significant amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, worsening the climate crisis. President Biden issued an Executive Order in 2022 directing the Forest Service to conserve mature forests just like those targeted for logging in the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project. Further, these trees store the most carbon on the landscape, protect essential drinking watersheds, mitigate the impacts of flooding, provide critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, and offer numerous cultural and recreational values.

The White Mountain National Forest last revised its management plan in 2005, and climate change was given little attention at the time. The scientific consensus on the threat of climate change and its impacts has increased exponentially in the years since. Forest Plans are required by law to be revised after 15 years, and it is time that the federal forest managers in the Northeast begin to factor carbon storage and climate resilience into their management decisions. Please pause the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project and reconsider the components of the project that plan to log mature trees and stands. These forests are worth more standing.

Attachment: Letter and information on 50 signatories to letter