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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mr. Mattrick,

I am an enrolled citizen of the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi, headquartered in Swanton, VT. I reside in West Hartford,. I am writing in response to the comment period for the proposed logging in the Telephone Gap area of the Green Mountain National Forest. The following constitutes my comments on the proposed activities:

Free, Prior and Informed Consent:

In September of 2007, the United Nations passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada endorsed the declaration in the spring of 2010, and the United States followed suit in December 2010. Six articles of this declaration outline a baseline of universally accepted, best practices concerning burial grounds, sacred and traditional sites, historic sites, repatriation, and curation of indigenous peoples[rsquo] remains and artifacts as well as the many issues of access to, use, and protection of these places. At the heart of this declaration is the demand that the policies and practices, which resulted in indigenous peoples [ldquo]cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs[rdquo] must be stopped and redressed [ldquo]through effective mechanisms[rdquo] (UNDRIP Article 11 (see Appendix 2)).

Article 43 states that the rights outlined in the document [ldquo]constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.[rdquo]

Article 11 also guarantees that indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

Article 12 underscores that indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains,

which requires that States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 32 further requires that States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.

And finally it is required in Articles 25, 26, and 29 that Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters, coastal seas, and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard (Article 25). Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired (Article 26). Indigenous peoples

have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired (Article 29). States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned (Article 29). Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programs for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination (Article 29).

Many aspects of these basic tenets were part of the best relationship between the newcomers and the Abenaki and other indigenous peoples in northern New York and New England and southern Quebec from the 18 to mid-19 centuries. Hidden though these practices were they helped protect numerous burial grounds, sacred sites, and eventually, whole village and subsistence grounds, unique ecologies, ridgelines, mountains, and mountain ranges. They also protected a substantial, if little known, surviving population of Abenaki and many other indigenous peoples who had sought refuge here from the genocidal Indian wars of the 17 to 19 centuries.

We now have solid proof regarding the Aln[ocirc]bak or western Abenaki that there were not just 300 or 400 speakers of Aln[ocirc]baiwi in the 1830 to 1850 period centered at Odanak. There were at least 2,000 fluent speakers living then at Sartigan, Pigwacket, Missisquoi, Koasek, Penacook, Nongunquit, and Sokwakik. Their relations were still living in every town and village in the old homeland. They were living outside N[rsquo]dakinna at Saratoga, Lake George, and Sacandoga, at Seneca, Onondaga, and Akwesasne, in many southern New England enclaves, and countless other places in North America. They survived and continued to teach their children and grandchildren the traditions and ancient knowledge as they still do today. Blackie Lampman told the author (John Moody) and Joe Bruchac before his death that [ldquo]We have always been here, and we will always be here.[rdquo] (Moody, J, 2011; [ldquo]Balance: An Overview of Abenaki and Indigenous Peoples, Burial/Site Protection, Repatriation, and Customs of Respect, Looting, and Site Destruction in the Abenaki Homeland, and Relations between Archeology, Ethnohistory, and Traditional Knowledge,[rdquo] The Journal of Vermont Archaeology, Vol. 12).

I personally know Abenaki traditional families in Vermont who are keepers of traditional Abenaki cultural practices and language, and whose families have passed these practices down for generations to them. I personally know, and have seen that there are rock cairns used for burials, home sites and navigational markers in the Green Mountain National Forests and State Parks in Vermont and New Hampshire that require protection. I also see that the Forest Service and States of Vermont and New Hampshire are not working closely with our Abenaki leaders, elders and traditional families to understand these facts and to work with us for the protection of these Sacred Sites. In addition, there are springs used by medicine gatherers/healers and traditional gathering areas that require protection.

Our Traditional Ecological Knowledge is required if we are to protect the Green Mountains and these ancient sites from destruction. The Abenaki Peoples must be at the table with the Forest Service and the State to prevent this logging. The State of Vermont recognizes that 98% of the land in Vermont is privately owned. Therefore, only 2% are National Forest and State owned lands. In Vermont, only 1% of our forested lands are determined to be old growth forests. This is the lowest percentage of all the New England states.

Question: Why can[rsquo]t Vermont leave the National and State owned lands free from timber management? Why can[rsquo]t the Abenaki Nation be allowed to help manage these lands into old growth status, without further timber harvesting?

I and the Abenaki Nation asks that this be allowed!

Coalition Support:

I support the comments that are to be submitted by our non-native ally Standing Trees and their scientists that confirm the science behind the traditional knowledge that the forests are better left without logging and to return to old growth naturally. In addition, in this time of climate crisis, it is not wise to take trees that are past the age of 40-60 years old and just beginning to become carbon sequesterers and replacing them with saplings that will take that long, as CO2 emitters, to begin sequestering carbon. We don't have that long!! We need these trees, old growth forests, now!! We can't afford to be taking these trees, we need their ability to sequester carbon now and into the future!

I also support the comments of the other Abenaki commenters that will be sending comments on this proposal. We have several that may be submitting these.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment of this proposal. Wliwni!