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Organization: Society for the Protection of NH Forests

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Comments: May 13, 2025 Brooke Brown, District Ranger White Mountain National Forest 71 White Mountain Drive, Campton, NH, 03223 Dear Ms. Brown: Thank you for accepting these comments in support of the White Mountain National Forest's Lost River Integrated Resource Project Resource Project. As you know, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests is a nearly 125 year old land trust and forestry organization whose mission is to perpetuate the forests of New Hampshire through their wise use and their complete reservation in places of special scenic beauty. We were formed by a group of citizens concerned with the rapid and poorly planned timber harvesting occurring in the White Mountains in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. Since the establishment of the White Mountain National Forest, we have considered the U.S. Forest Service to be a key partner in the protection and management of the forest resources in this state. As such, we have engaged with the agency in the development of past forest plans dating back to the original passage of the National Forest Management Act in 1976, including the current WMNF Land and Resource Management Plan (WMNF Plan). The Forest Service's responsibility to steward the White Mountain National Forest for multiple purposes and uses is similar to that of the Forest Society as we manage our reservations. Forest products, outdoor recreation, opportunities for public education and the protection of water and soil resources are some of the many benefits all of us receive from the forests in New Hampshire, including those in the White Mountains. The current WMNF Plan details these multiple goals and objectives the Forest Service must balance. The 2005 Forest Plan was the product of several years of public engagement, ultimately resulting in a consensus plan that balanced many interests and perspectives and was implemented without legal challenge. The overarching goal of the WMNF Plan is to strengthen the health and resilience of the White Mountain National Forest while balancing the multiple uses which define the National Forest System. The draft Environmental Assessment describes how this proposal will achieve that goal and follows the requirements of the plan by providing "a sustained yield of high-quality timber products; a balanced mix of habitats for wildlife; a variety of recreation opportunities; and managing a high-use or highly developed recreation areas to acceptable social and ecological standards while retaining some low-use and less developed areas." We recognize and understand the challenges agencies like the U.S. Forest Service must address while stewarding the nation's public lands. We have also appreciated the comprehensive planning process the WMNF has used for prior resource management projects. This inclusive approach has ensured the management work is done sustainably and with the input from the public and other resource specialists. The Forest Society will continue to engage on this project as the planning process moves forward. Thank you again for accepting these comments. Sincerely, ~ Matt Leahy, Public Policy Director Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests