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First name: Tom

Last name: Wessels

Organization:

Title:

Comments: We write this letter to express our concern over the Pemigewasset District's recommendations for the Lake Tarleton region.

We fully understand the general multi-use mission of the White Mountain National Forest and the National Forest generally. Furthermore, while we are in agreement with the recent Presidential Executive order calling for a more accurate inventory of "Old Growth" forests to help address the Climate Emergency, we are not opposed to responsible and carefully managed logging within the national forest generally.

However, there is a well-established tradition within the National Forest of identifying certain areas that have significant cultural and environmental value and protecting them with a higher level "Scenic Area" status. We believe that the area around Lakes Tarleton, Armington, Katherine stretching along the Appalachian Trail corridor north to Webster Slide, and Wachipauka Pond warrant such treatment. Furthermore, any logging in this region may pose a threat to important, and still unexamined, cultural resources including Abenaki hunting villages and the early colonial settlement of the now-extinct town of Charleston, as well as the unspoiled and pristine nature of its lakes.

In keeping with the intent of the original land acquisition, the White Mountain National Forest should remove this and all future threats to Lake Tarleton's surrounding forest by amending the 2005 White Mountain National Forest Plan and designating a Scenic Area in the landscape surrounding Lake Tarleton, Lake Katherine, Lake Armington, and stretching along the Appalachian Trail corridor north to Webster Slide, and Wachipauka Pond. This contiguous landscape is among the most scenic in the Granite State. And yet, despite designating nine (9) unique Scenic Areas in the eastern portion of the WMNF, the White Mountain National Forest has not designated any Scenic Areas west of I-93. For the benefit of the local tourism and recreation economy, and for the integrity of this treasured landscape, including Abenaki and early colonial historical resources, it would be both environmentally and culturally short-sighted to allow logging in these areas - which only constitute a very small portion of the western WMNF and less than  $\frac{1}{14}$  of the land protected through the millions of dollars invested in the Tarleton watershed area in 2000. We respectfully request that you amend the White Mountain National Forest management plan and designate this area a Scenic Area to permanently remove the threat of logging and development.

This designation would satisfy the concerns of the donors who helped purchase the land and those who have been advocating for its protection and avoid the need for a costly Environmental Impact Assessment that, arguably, should be engaged if the current plan is to move forward.

Given the environmental and cultural uniqueness of the Lake Tarleton watershed, issuing a DRAFT "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) may avoid the need to do a full EIS but leaves the communities who contributed more than 7.5 million dollars to preserve the land feeling that their investment expectations have been ignored. It may also open the WMNF to litigation over the DRAFT FONSI finding in favor of a full-blown Environmental Impact Analysis.

All this could be avoided with a Scenic Designation allowing for better protection of the cultural resources and conservative management of the apple orchards and areas where invasive species require control without logging and clearcutting in the immediate Lake Tarleton Watershed. We urge you to take this route.