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Comments: I am writing today regarding the Lake Tarleton Integrated Resource Project. I have received several emails, text messages and have also read some guest editorials that I believe are inaccurate or do not fully explain the context of the resource decisions to be made for this area. I spent 40 years of my life working for the people of the United States in public land management with the last fifteen years of my career here on the White Mountain National Forest. In retirement, I volunteer for several conservation organizations in hopes that in some small way I can continue to ensure our important landscapes are here and functioning for future generations. Like many of the commenters, I value the beautiful Lake Tarleton area and visit the area in the spring, summer and fall for various recreational pursuits. I hope my comments are helpful as you develop your decision and work with the diverse input you are getting on this project.

Intent of Acquisition

I began my tenure as Forest Supervisor less than one year after the Lake Tarleton area was put into the National Forest system. I was still actively working with the Trust for Public Land officials on the deposition of some of the private buildings and other details associated with the acquisition during my first year on the Forest. Protection of all the values associated with the lake were certainly part of the reason why this acquisition was supported but at no time did anyone ever communicate that this area would be managed outside the normal public process of determining which management activities were appropriate for the future.

My experience throughout the country and consistent with public policy is that the federal government acquires land unencumbered outside of any deed restrictions such as easements or right of ways. Appropriately in this case future management options for the area were considered during the preparation of the programmatic Land and Resource Management Plan. This Plan was actively being revised during this time period and all the groups present at the dedication of Lake Tarleton were involved and supported this significant public participation process. This process included the release of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, multiple public meetings and a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision in 2005. This Plan allowed for the practice of sustainable forestry on less than 35% of the 800,000 acres of the White Mountain National Forest to accomplish multiple benefits with stringent guidelines and oversight. The Plan was recognized nationally because of the stakeholder's ability to support compromise, tradeoffs and ultimately develop consensus that would protect the land and provide multiple benefits.

I also know that the implementation of the Plan has been monitored over time which is documented in public documents and that you continue to incorporate the latest available science through your site-specific Environmental Assessments and Forest Plan amendments. I do not concur with some of the commenters that the Plan is now obsolete because in their view public opinion has changed.

Effects on Resource Values

Many of emails I have received on this project express concerns that timber harvest will destroy resource values such as water quality, scenic values, bird watching habitat and cultural resources. While the Environmental Assessment touches on these concerns, I know that your resource professionals have gone into more depth on how these values are protected or enhanced during the harvest operations in the project file. I hope your final decision can highlight some of this information to improve on the understanding on how the Forest Service redeems their responsibilities to provide for sustainable landscapes over time.

Climate Change

We are fortunate to have researchers in New Hampshire who are doing extensive work on the complex issue of climate change and the carbon associated with our Forests. It is recognized in the environmental assessment supporting documents that the White Mountain National Forest is trending overall to an older Forest that will be more susceptible to climate induced stressors such as extreme weather events, insect outbreaks, invasive species and moisture and temperature stresses. It appears to me and many scientists that maintaining a diversity of species and age classes through sustainable forestry practices is a prudent management approach to mitigating the effects of climate change. Given the management direction in the current Forest Plan the National Forest will still serve as a significant carbon sink for New England.

Don't Cut Trees or Cut Them Somewhere Else

I am aware of three midsized lumber mills and several smaller mills located in the Baker River Valley in close proximity to Lake Tarleton. These businesses and their supporting contractors provide jobs and pay taxes that help support functioning communities in this part of New Hampshire. While this isn't mentioned in the socioeconomic section of the document, I think it is important to recognize since it is part of the analysis in the Forest Plan that supports the decisions on a mix of management activities.

Just as significant to me is the dismaying thought that we as New Hampshire residents or Americans will continue to use wood and paper products but will not be willing to prudently manage our forest to help provide this renewable resource. We live in an area with resilient ecosystems, professional resource managers and in most cases responsible logging contractors but according to some commenters we can still expect "catastrophic and tragic effects" from the harvesting of trees. This thinking at the broader macro level, will ultimately send our demand for wood to other places in the world where there is little or no management protections or oversight and only worsen our climate crisis.

In closing, I hope that after reviewing all the comments on this project and giving them thoughtful consideration, you will make whatever adjustments necessary and proceed with a project that provides a balanced management approach. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.