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Comments: The climate crisis demands that we protect mature forests, not log them. How do I bring up my kids, knowing the future may not hold the stability and prosperity we have enjoyed? How do I explain to them that while the planet burned, we in the Green Mountain State, allowed our government to destroy this carbon sink for the sake of some timber products and money?

The areas proposed for logging in the Telephone Gap timber sale have major concentrations of mature trees between 80-160 years old, which science shows accumulate and store the most carbon compared to young trees. The GMNF has greater carbon density than most forests in the Eastern US; we should manage this public land for the benefit of the climate and biodiversity, not cut it down.

Research shows that our forests could store 2 to 4 times more carbon if we just let them grow old. Letting these old trees stand is one of the most effective things that Vermonters can do to combat climate change and extinction. Private forests are the source of 96% of the timber supply in Vermont; protecting public forests would have minimal impact on the wood products economy.

Mature forests also foster biodiversity, clean water, and climate resilience. Many of New England's most imperiled species, including pine marten, Northern Long-eared Bats, and brook trout, thrive in healthy, old forests. Old forests excel at removing the phosphorus and nitrogen that drive algal blooms and dead zones in our rivers, lakes, and ponds. And they are exceptional at reducing the impacts of both floods and droughts, by slowing, sinking, and storing water.

We NEED our public forests to be conserved to help us -- humans and other species we share Vermont with -- survive. No clearcutting! Logging should only happen in these forests where it is prescribed to restore biodiversity and carbon sequestration.