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Comments: Hello - I am writing to indicate my opposition to the proposed logging project in Telephone Gap. This massive timber sale would endanger the water quality of Chittenden Reservoir, introduce invasive species, release vast amounts of carbon to the atmosphere, and destroy habitat needed by threatened and endangered species like the Northern Long-eared Bat. Adding insult to injury, the project also proposes more than 2,500-acres of logging in one of Vermont's largest unprotected wildlands, a 16,000-acre "inventoried roadless area" that straddles the Long Trail and the crest of the Green Mountains south of Brandon Gap.

Historically, old-growth forests dominated the New England landscape, supporting native biodiversity and rich indigenous cultures. In a short period of time, these remarkable forests - and the species and cultures that grew from them - were eliminated (or nearly-so) from our region by European settlers and their descendants. Old forests are exceptional for sequestering and storing vast amounts of carbon, protecting water quality, and mitigating droughts and floods. Today, just 0.3% of New England forests are older than 150 years.

Despite the rarity of old forests across New England, the Telephone Gap timber sale targets 10,855-acres of mature and old forest up to 160 years of age, or 92% of the total area proposed for logging. Because of this, Telephone Gap has been called one of the worst logging projects on federal public lands by Climate Forests, a national coalition of 120 environmental groups.

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 in the fight against climate change 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 by the University of Vermont shows that New England forests could store 2 to 4 times more carbon if we just let them grow old. Letting mature and 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, so protecting public forests would have minimal impact on the wood products economy. We must put our public forests on a different path.

Mature and old forests matter for a lot more reasons than the carbon that they store. These same forests are also powerhouses for 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.

Thanks for considering my views in this matter.