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Comments: I write as a physician who has a home in/ spends much time in VT (including hiking in the Green Mountain National Forest) and as member of a group of physicians and public health experts dedicated to fighting against environmental degradation and the climate crisis.

Mature trees are integral to removing excess CO₂ from the atmosphere and helping to reduce our rising greenhouse gas levels; deforestation is well recognized to accelerate climate change. Climate change is already having devastating effects on people's health, though more heat-related illnesses, respiratory and cardiovascular disease, vector borne diseases, and increasingly intense storms, and these are expected to worsen with rising carbon dioxide levels. Climate change-related conditions disproportionately affect already vulnerable persons (eg low income communities, communities of color, and those who are very young or old or who have pre-existing diseases) but pose risks for all of us. Removing trees in the Telephone Gap (over 90% of which are mature) is incompatible with President Biden's 2022 Executive Order directing the US Forest Service to protect these forests to mitigate climate change and maintain biodiversity. Planting new trees cannot replace the benefits of the mature trees already present. I -and my colleagues-urge you NOT to cut down mature trees in order to protect the health of persons in VT and more broadly.