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Comments: I oppose the logging of 11,800 acres of mostly mature and old trees in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) east of Brandon (Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project) for the following reasons:

#### National Climate Impact

The areas proposed for logging have major concentrations of 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. The International Panel on Climate Change states that time is running out for action. On the global scale, forest protection represents approximately half or more of the climate change mitigation needed to hold temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Research also shows that New England's forests could store two to four times more carbon if we just let them grow old.

#### Headwaters at Risk

The Telephone Gap timber sale threatens important headwaters for Otter Creek, which flows into Lake Champlain, as well as the White River, a tributary of the Connecticut River. Logging threatens water supply areas like the Chittenden Reservoir, and risks exacerbating flooding in downstream communities. Imperiled brook trout and reintroduced populations of Atlantic salmon depend on cold, clear water flowing from these high mountain streams.

#### Species on the Brink

The Northern Long-eared Bat is a species that is teetering on the edge of extinction. The US Fish and Wildlife Service listed the bat as "endangered" in November 2022. The Northern Long-eared Bat prefers mature and old-growth forests for roosting and foraging - exactly the sorts of areas that are proposed for logging. Much of the Telephone Gap project area is suitable habitat for this endangered bat.