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Comments:

It's concerning to hear about the proposed Telephone Gap logging project in the Green Mountain National Forest. As a member of the public, I strongly oppose this project and urge the US Forest Service to reconsider its plans. The proposed Telephone Gap logging project, involving the cutting down of 11,800 acres of old-growth forests in Vermont, raises serious concerns regarding its potential catastrophic impacts on critical ecological and sociological elements, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity, water resources, cultural and recreational value, and the local economy, and thus, demands urgent reconsideration by the US Forest Service.

There are numerous reasons why cutting down 11,800 acres of old-growth forests in Vermont, as proposed by the Telephone Gap logging project, would be a devastating mistake. The potential resource gains from logging would not be worth the significant losses that would directly result from this action. Here are some compelling reasons to reconsider this project:

1. Carbon sequestration: Old-growth forests are exceptional at capturing and storing carbon, making them a crucial tool in the fight against climate change. Cutting down 11,800 acres of these forests would release an enormous amount of stored carbon back into the atmosphere, contributing to the already dire situation of climate change. With the current urgency to reduce carbon emissions, it's clear that losing these forests would be a significant step in the wrong direction.

2. Climate impact: The proposed logging of nearly 12,000 acres, 92% of which are classified as mature or old-growth by the Green Mountain National Forest, violates President Biden's Executive Order to protect mature and old-growth forests for the benefit of the climate and biodiversity. Mature and old-growth forests have the unique ability to remove and store carbon from the atmosphere. It's concerning that this project proposes logging forests up to 160 years in age, which could have significant impacts on carbon sequestration and storage.

3. Biodiversity loss: Old-growth forests support an incredible array of plant and animal life, with many species relying on these habitats to survive. Cutting down such a large area of these forests would have a catastrophic impact on biodiversity in the region, potentially leading to the extinction of some species. It's essential that we protect these ecosystems, which play a vital role in maintaining a healthy and functioning environment.

4. Threat to species: The Northern Long-eared Bat, a species that is already endangered, relies on mature and old-growth forests for roosting and foraging. Given that much of the Telephone Gap project area is suitable habitat for this species, logging in this area could further threaten its survival. It's important to consider the impact that this project may have on endangered species and their habitats.

5. Water resources: The Telephone Gap project area includes important headwaters for Otter Creek, which flows into Lake Champlain, and the White River, a tributary of the Connecticut River. Logging in these areas could threaten water supply areas such as the Chittenden Reservoir, and could also exacerbate flooding in downstream communities. The project may also have negative impacts on species such as brook trout and Atlantic salmon, which rely on cold, clear water flowing from high mountain streams.

6. Threat to wildlands: Nearly 2,600 acres of logging are proposed inside the 16,000-acre Pittenden Inventoried Roadless Area, one of the largest wildlands in Vermont. This area is important for wildlife habitat and connectivity, as well as quiet recreation. It's concerning that such a large area of this wildland is on the chopping block, and I urge the US Forest Service to reconsider this proposal.

7. Water resources: Old-growth forests are key to ensuring clean water for our communities. They help maintain healthy watersheds, which in turn help to prevent water pollution and flooding downstream. Cutting down such a large area of these forests could have severe negative consequences for water quality, with potential risks to public health, property, and the environment.

8. Cultural and recreational value: Old-growth forests have significant cultural and recreational value, and their loss would be felt deeply by Vermonters and visitors alike. These forests are cherished for their beauty, history, and the sense of peace and tranquility they provide. They also provide significant economic benefits through tourism and recreation, which would be lost if they were destroyed.

Think of Alternatives: There are viable alternatives to cutting down these old-growth forests. For example, we could focus on sustainable forest management practices that allow for selective cutting and encourage the growth of younger forests. By investing in these alternatives, we can protect the vital ecosystems and watersheds of the region while still supporting the local economy.

In conclusion, the potential gains from cutting down 11,800 acres of old-growth forests in Vermont are simply not worth the significant losses that would result from this action. We cannot afford to sacrifice these critical ecosystems and watersheds, which play a vital role in protecting the environment and supporting human well-being. I urge the US Forest Service to reconsider this project and focus on alternative solutions that will ensure the long-term health of the region. I care deeply about protecting public forests for the climate, clean water, and biodiversity, and urge the US Forest Service to protect the Green Mountain National Forest from this proposed logging project. We have one chance to make a change in the best interest of the general public of Vermont, and all states in the Northeast. Thank you for considering my comments.