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First name: J.T.
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear GMNF-
I wanted to offer my support for the creation of a new system of huts and trails that are included in the Telephone Gap project. I also want to support a more active style of forest management that includes timber harvesting within the project area.

I am particularly looking forward to using the proposed hut site at South Pond on lands proposed for GMNF acquisition. I have been to this site many times while trail running. One of my favorite trips in Vermont is the run from Gifford Woods State Park up the Appalachian Trail to Maine Junction and the Long Trail to Rolston Rest shelter and turning onto the gravel road to South Pond. The trip ends at an overlook towards Chittenden Reservoir, which is one of the best in the Central Green Mountains. Adding a cabin for a water break, an overnight stay, or a place to appreciate this view is a worthy and appropriate addition to our system of trails and backcountry facilities on public lands in Vermont.

As a trail runner, I am especially interested in new trail networks in this area, especially ones that would connect to the Long Trail making for easier loop opportunities. Vermont is blessed with great trails, but most of them are linear point-to-point trips, which are not as desirable as loops. The proposed Velomont trail will be a wonderful new destination and I hope the layout will connect and cross with other trails enabling longer loops.

Finally, I am fully supportive of the timber harvesting and wildlife management actions proposed in the plan. I have followed the GMNF management actions for 25 years and witnessed the steady decline in the amount of timber harvested on the national forest. This is sad to see as I believe in the multiple use mandate of the USFS and think that commercial timber harvest is an appropriate use of the land in the Telephone Gap area, which are mostly generic northern hardwood forests. Based on personal observations of past USFS harvesting, I believe that your foresters do exemplary work and the planning and implementation of wildlife friendly practices and water quality protection are far superior to most commercial timber harvesting on private lands. Thinking about your niche in the landscape, USFS lands are especially valuable as sources of veneer and high quality hardwood sawlogs. The stability of public ownership enables the kind of long-term thinking about forest management that leads to high value wood products that are useful to society and also sequester carbon in furniture, flooring, framing, and other wood products. I strongly urge you to keep harvesting timber as described in the plan and to keep following your exemplary practices.

Finally, I hope that the resources you have to plan recreation improvements, habitat improvements, and production of forest products are not diverted to dealing with appeals and litigation. The Green Mountain National Forest provides a vital set of public benefits for Vermonters and for visitors. It would be a shame to halt progress on things like the Catamount Trail, Velomont Trail, Vermont Huts and other endeavors that get people out into nature, having fun, connecting with each other, and experiencing our beautiful public lands. It's why I live in this state and why I frequently visit our public lands. I hope that your forest leadership will be resolute to pursue your multiple use mandate, honor long-term trail partnerships, and not be influenced by grandstanding groups that seem to fundamentally misunderstand the mission of the US Forest Service or the traditions of Vermonters finding balance and compromise when it comes to our public lands.

-J.T. Horn