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Comments: Hello, I am very concerned about the proposed logging. Mature and old-growth forests excel at removing and storing carbon from the atmosphere. And yet, 92% of the areas proposed for logging in the Telephone Gap timber sale are classified as mature or old by the Green Mountain National Forest, violating President Biden's historic Executive Order from Earth Day 2022, which directed the US Forest Service to protect these forests for the benefit of the climate and biodiversity. In December, the US Forest Service withdrew a timber sale in Oregon called "Flat Country" because it targeted mature forests of up to 150 years in age. Telephone Gap proposes logging forests up to 160 years in age. If Flat Country was important to withdraw, why is the Telephone Gap timber sale moving forward? Numerous wildlife, including the almost endangered Northern Long Eared bat, would be displaced. 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.

Of the 11,800 acres proposed for logging, the Telephone Gap timber sale proposes nearly 2,600 acres of logging inside the 16,000-acre Pittenden Inventoried Roadless Area, second largest in the entire Green Mountain National Forest and one of the largest wildlands in Vermont. Straddling an undeveloped and rugged section of the Long Trail from Brandon Gap south towards Chittenden Reservoir, this area is important for wildlife habitat and connectivity as well as quiet recreation. Please reject this proposal as a detrimental to our already critical climate emergency. We must do better than this and out the earth over profits, people over greed, and respect our planet and its fellow inhabitants.