

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/2/2023 6:50:44 PM

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Comments: ?I'm writing as someone who has deep connections to Vermont and her lands. Both my maternal and paternal lineages were Vermont hillside farm families, settling in Vermont in the late 1700s and early 1800s respectively. One of those farms, no longer in operation, is still held by one branch of the family. My father was born in the farm house, as were his brothers. As a child I grew up in the meadows, barns and farm kitchens. We went sugaring in the "old sugar woods" by horse drawn sleigh (the real deal), literally riding over the brook (sometimes through, when the ice was thin) emptying pails of sap into the collection tank. Some of the "old sugar woods" still stand, trees tapped by multiple generations of my family. Trees that have weakened and died have become nurse trees and homes for the woodland insects and critters. The "old sugar woods" essentially back up to the National Forest boundary and the brook, that brook is the Otter Creek. The Otter comes down from the eastern highlands on it's way to Lake Champlain, flowing directly through the "old sugar woods" and on through the open farmland where it turns north.

The proposed cut will impact the Otter Creek headwaters, as well as forests similar to those still held by members of my family. Already, in the last decade or so, the creek has raged in the spring and during heavy rain events, bringing with it graveL, downed trees, large rocks and other flotsam which it deposits in the meadows. The meadows now flood frequently, a wasteland, no longer useful for crop plantings. The damage has been significant and costly to clean up. The planned cutting of the acreage within the Telephone Gap, if approved, would take valuable old and mature trees at a time when they are desperately needed . Old forest trees are nature's retaining walls, holding back rocks, soil, debris and managing water flow. In addition, the loss of forest and trees along Vermont's rivers and streams, including the Otter and the Battenkill, has warmed the once chilly waters that are needed habitat for cold water fish species.

I have hiked the Long Trail from Rte 30 north to Rutland along the ridge line of the Green Mountains many times. The old forests on this hike are wonderous and magical places. They are a refuge for deer, bear, moose and other wildlife, at a time when development is encroaching and silence is a rare commodity. I have worked the trails further south in the Glastonbury Wilderness; relocating trails, digging water bars and building rock stairs to stop erosion so this special place will endure.

I am strongly opposed to Project #60912. This project ignores President Biden's historic executive order to preserve and protect old and mature forests. These forests are a necessary element in the mitigation of climate change, carbon sequestration and protection of the remaining biodiversity. The Otter Creek has already been irreversibly changed by development and logging, especially during melt periods and heavy rain events, when it's carrying capacity is overwhelmed. The proposed cut would create additional water flow, causing additional flooding and water quality issues. The beauty and water supply of the Chittenden Reservoir will be threatened and an important corridor for wildlife will be diminished, if not totally destroyed.

We need to preserve all forests, especially old and mature forests. To reiterate, my opposition to this project could not be stronger.