

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/6/2023 8:53:50 PM

First name: Finn

Last name: Murphy

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello!

I'm writing in support of the Vermont Huts Association's application for a special use permit in the proposed action for the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project to construct, operate, and maintain a four-season hut within the footprint of the former lodge that was destroyed by fire near South Pond. A hut in this location takes advantage of existing infrastructure and is ideally situated to host users of the trails mentioned below, creating a new point of access to the outdoors for trail users of all ages and abilities. Additionally, I support the USDA Forest Service's proposal to create 34.9 miles of trail through new construction, relocation, and designation for mountain biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing, which will greatly enhance the public's ability to enjoy this incredible public resource that is the Green Mountain National Forest. These projects will provide critical trail connectivity for both the Velomont Trail and Catamount Trail and service numerous user groups.

I also support the addition of 3.1 miles of existing Long Trail to the National Forest Trail System as part of the pending South Pond acquisition.

I however do not agree with the plans to subjugate old-growth/mature-growth forested areas to logging. The Forest Service should focus on protecting Vermont's already vulnerable watersheds, biodiversity conservation, and our future goals for carbon sequestration. Logging Telephone Gap will, directly and indirectly, go perpendicular to the before-stated goals/missions. The telephone gap is already home to three long-distance trails, the Long Trail, Catamount Trail, and the future Velomont Trail. Rebuilding South Pond Hut will provide people access to stunning backcountry recreation opportunities within the proposed Telephone Gap project area.

I hope you consider my thoughts and those of the thousands of others who are concerned with your logging plans.

Sincerely,

-Finn Murphy
Elmore, VT