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Comments: RE the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project #60192:

I am strongly, strongly against this project.

First, we should be making every effort to mitigate the climate crisis bearing down upon all of us. Logging this vast area is counter to that effort. The entire forest area defined in the Telephone Gap project should be maintained as undisturbed forest, allowing the trees in this ecosystem to continue to age. Many are 70-80 years old or older, on their way to becoming old growth. Old growth forests capture some 30% more carbon than managed forest, such as proposed in the Telephone Gap project. To log this area now would interrupt the aging of this complex successional ecosystem, damaging or destroying a recovery that began almost a century ago. We would lose this valuable increased carbon capture, something that we can ill afford as the world's temperatures continue to rise.

Second, the project's logging will interfere with the area's ability to absorb the impact of increasing rainfall and bigger storms. The standing forest, allowed to continue to develop into an old growth ecosystem, will be far better at managing the heavy downpours, more frequent and more intense storms. Logging will only increase runoff and flooding, and will destabilize the soils upon which that logging takes place. Further heavy rainfall and storms will make this damage worse, with the potential to create disastrous and irreversible change to the logged acreage.

Third, the Telephone Gap tract contains some of the best and most beautiful hiking in New England, indeed in the country. Some of my most cherished wilderness experiences have been along these trails. Although I have no children of my own, I have 30 years teaching many students in public and private schools. It is my experience with so many children and youth, over and over again, at every age, that access and exposure to wilderness is a treasure for them. It is my deepest wish that this treasure be preserved, passed on to future generations for all the benefits and gifts wilderness offers. Logging threatens and destroys that preservation, and whatever would be gained monetarily is meaningless. Wilderness is priceless.

I urge you to abandon the Telephone Gap Project.

Sincerely,

Cathy Mihaly