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Comments: The following are my comments on the Telephone Gap project, #60192:

After reviewing the proposed Forest Service plan, I must comment that the plan talks about making the forest in the Telephone Gap area more healthy by doing logging treatments. I grew up next door to a natural resources scientist who was considered to be number one in the world in his area of expertise. He told me over and over again that the healthiest natural environments are those that man doesn't interfere with and try to make better. This FS plan confuses making the forest better for the future, when it is actually making it better for future logging, not for the future health of the forest in the warming planet or for the warming planet. In other words this plan talks about preparing the Forest for climate change, but instead uses treatments for preparing for future logging, which is out of date for the new environmental situation in which we are supposed to be preparing for the future with climate change instead. That is why the President has ordered that older growth forests on federal forest lands are to be left alone to store carbon as a way to slow climate change until we get our act together to keep from releasing so much carbon dioxide in this country.

One example of trying to straighten out nature when it doesn't need man's straightening is the statement in the plan that there used to be a lot more conifers in this area, and we must bring them back. Well, there was a large study done in Vermont about 30 years ago which disproved this widely held theory that in pre colonial days there were a lot more conifers on the lands of Vermont. They disproved this theory by reviewing large numbers of surveys done in the 1700's and early 1800's that described the trees at angles and corners of surveyed lands. These researchers found that there was almost no difference in the percentage of conifers and deciduous trees throughout Vermont back then compared to now. Also, there is a painting done by James Hope in 1855, with part of the Telephone Gap area in the background, which shows the forest behind the very large fields to consist of the same percentage of conifers and deciduous trees we see today.

Another reason there should not be an increase in conifers is this area (in addition to the fact that our northern conifers will do more poorly in the global warming environment than deciduous trees) is because the FS plan calls for an increase in deep woods recreation, which includes an extensive Velomont trail system and a large recreation building called a "hut". This extra deep woods activity will invite more forest fires, which are devastating in conifer forest areas.

The Velomont trail has been poorly thought out. For example, just southeast of South Pond there is proposed to be built a Velomont trail between the long trail and a forest road called "South Pond - Old Turnpike Connector" on the FS plan map. This will but three parallel trails within a few hundred yards of each other, when the Velomont trail should use that wide South Pond Connector trail instead of building a new trail through the rough terrain between the other trails, which by the way is a resting area for wildlife to get away from human activity on the other two trails. Talking about building a trail on rough terrain, the Velomont people need to make an ironclad agreement for repairing and maintaining these trails they build, and secure a bond for repairs or restoration of the lands if they go out of business. Maintaining each mile of a trail is a huge job - just ask the Green Mountain Club, who expound on it constantly.

The plan calls for the application of herbicides to promote the growth of oaks. This will be done very close to Rutland City's drinking water resource. The FS will want to discuss this with the city officials because they are very sensitive about anything that they perceive may affect their water (they don't even like horses). They will be especially interested in how it will be guaranteed that the herbicide applicator will be doing everything perfectly, not just well.

In the FS plan there is talk of the need for man to create early successional habitat in the Telephone gap area. Early successional habitat is created naturally when man leaves a forest alone and lets nature do its thing. The completely unlogged Aiken Wilderness in southern Vermont has recently created a huge natural early successional habitat that is several hundred yards wide and over a mile long as a result of the huge trees being blown over by a wind storm. The ground in this natural early successional area is still moist and cool, not hot and dead dry, like at a logging job. This is because of the semi shade provided by the huge downed logs and limbs, and some of these logs are still six to eight feet off the ground while parallel to the ground. This provides varied sunlight which promotes the healthiest varied growth. Can man do this?

By the way, I have spent thousands of hours operating a chainsaw.

Thank you for reading this,

Justin Lindholm