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First name: Annette
Last name: Smith
Organization: Vermonters for a Clean Environment
Title: Executive Director
Comments: Vermonters for a Clean Environment appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project.

We support protection of the area as a biodiversity hot spot.

We oppose the plan to log mature forests.

We oppose logging in areas which will reduce water quality and increase sedimentation.

Since the 2006 Forest Plan does not consider the Velomont Trail or a network of huts, we oppose inclusion of those projects in the plan. However, if the USDA-FS chooses to amend the 2006 plan, we support taking the opportunity to increase Wilderness Areas within the Telephone Gap area and, instead of logging allow the forest to grow old.

We object to the use of insecticides to control the Emerald Ash Borer. And we object to the use of herbicides near the Mendon Brook, which is the water source for Rutland City. In general we support hand removal of invasive species, not chemical use. And we have become well aware that the increase in logging results in the increase in invasive species. Therefore, at this time, the best approach to minimizing invasive species is to leave the forest alone.

Please respect the 2006 forest plan and do not allow activities that are not specifically part of the 2006 plan. We all know it is out-dated, but it was the result of public processes, and until we have a new plan, it is what we must live with.

In any future work, we expect to see a robust exploration of the alternative to "do nothing." VCE believes that this will have the greatest benefit to the environment.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Annette Smith
Executive Director
Vermonters for a Clean Environment
789 Baker Brook Road
Danby, VT. 05739
vce@vce.org