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Comments: To Whom it concerns

I have two reasons to respectfully suggest that any decision about the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project be delayed. One is the Forest Service must have an opportunity to examine and realign their policies and priorities with the reality of climate change. The second is that the supposed difference between management and exploitation of forest assets is horribly confused at the moment, especially in the eyes of the public. It makes no sense to move forward with the Telephone Gap Project now.

I am disturbed that there has been no directive to the USFS to fundamentally re-examine outdated objectives. For example, as written in "This is Who We Are" (Forest Service publication FS-1124a January 2019):

As a Federal agency in service to the American people, the Forest Service cares for shared natural resources in ways that promote lasting economic, ecological, and social vitality.

Though these are obviously still held up as foundational aims, "economic" and "social" concerns are no longer equal to "ecological" considerations. The dangers of ignoring the dual environmental challenges of climate change and dwindling biodiversity are imminent and real. How are the negative effects of climate change (as are made known with painful regularity in daily headlines) in any way balanced by the interests of the wood products industry or recreational activity? If climate change is not given top consideration the Forest Service, then where does this responsibility lie? Management of public forests to best maintain their robust accumulation of carbon and sequestration of greenhouse gasses has to be the guiding principle, - maybe not forever but most certainly at this point in time. We are in crisis. The Forest Service can serve the public best by avoiding all measures that increase GHG emissions, even if where a GHG increase is thought to be temporary. Until we know more, any actions taken should follow the principle of "do no harm". Any decisions must exhibit cautious and responsible evaluation of current data.

Please, halt the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project.

Sincerely,

Susanna Lewis (Vermont)