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Comments: I am alarmed about this project given that we are in a time of increasing damage from climate change and the fact that old trees play an essential role in sequestering carbon. The Telephone Gap project and the Plan do not consider and value this important role.

Mature and old-growth forests excel at removing and storing carbon from the atmosphere. And yet, 92% of the areas proposed for logging in the Telephone Gap timber sale are classified as mature or old by the Green Mountain National Forest, violating President Biden's historic Executive Order from Earth Day 2022, which directed the US Forest Service to protect these forests for the benefit of the climate and biodiversity. This project goes against that Executive Order and should be cancelled.

Climate change scientists Beverly Law and William Moomaw tell us that " Forests pull about one-third of all human-caused carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere each year. Researchers have calculated that ending deforestation and allowing mature forests to keep growing could enable forests to take up twice as much carbon." So keeping large trees in the ground is an incredibly effective and cheap way to reduce climate change. This project goes in exactly the wrong direction. It will increase climate change by releasing carbon as these trees are removed, and by preventing these valuable trees from continuing their free carbon removal and storage services. This project should be cancelled.

Deforestation is a key accelerant of the climate crisis. Cutting down trees not only releases carbon into the atmosphere, but also sacrifices a critical pathway for carbon absorption long into the future. Due to decades of logging, American forests now have far less biomass than they would have if managed by mother nature.

Logging does not "restore" forest health but rather harms remaining trees. Through underground mazes of roots, fungi, and bacteria called "mycorrhizal networks," trees share resources like water and nutrients, helping each other survive stresses. Forest thinning disrupts these mycorrhizal networks, leaving remaining trees more vulnerable to disease, pest attack, and drought, shortening their life span.

Research by the University of Vermont shows that New England forests could store 2 to 4 times more carbon if we just let them grow old. Letting mature and old trees stand is one of the most effective things that we can do to combat climate change and extinction.

Private forests are the source of 96% of the timber supply in Vermont, so protecting public forests would have minimal impact on the wood products economy. We must put our public forests on a different path.

Please cancel this reckless and destructive project that has absolutely no public benefit and would accelerate and exacerbate climate change and extinction.