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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear District Ranger Chris Mattrick,

I am writing in regards to the proposed Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project.

Please refrain from harvesting trees in areas that have been inventoried as roadless or recommended for Wilderness designation at any point in the past. These roadless and recommended wilderness descriptors only apply to a very small, special portion of the Green Mountain National Forest, and these special characteristics would be degraded by the act of timber harvest.

Do not harvest any stands classified as mature or old in the Green Mountain National Forest forest plan. These stands have significantly recovered from Vermont's near-total deforestation of centuries past, and are regaining the soils, age diversity, and characteristics of an old forest. This recovery is something to be celebrated, not "harvested" or "managed."

These recovering mature and old forest tracts provide important habitat for old-growth dependent species like the northern long-eared bat, pine marten, eastern wild brook trout, wood thrush, cerulean warblers, salamanders and other amphibians, fungi, mosses, and ferns, and so many others. They sequester and store carbon in woody mass, roots, and soils, and their recovering soils and pit and mound topography store water.

All of these natural services -- wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and water storage -- will become even more important in the face of climate change. These forests can be part of our locally-crafted solutions to global challenges. The ability of old forests to store carbon and water must be considered to understand the full benefits of these forests when left to grow old. Paired with any potential proposed action, the Green Mountain National Forest should include a No Action Alternative that fully accounts for these clear (and growing) benefits.

Due to decisions foresters and landowners made before I was born, I will never have the opportunity to see any large stands of truly old forest in Vermont during my lifetime. A few paltry remnants of old forest are all that remain as a glimpse of what our forests used to be.

The areas proposed for timber harvest in and around Telephone Gap have benefited from time, and are beginning to recover after 100-150 years. While still "young" by the measure of what a forest could and should be, these stands are significantly older than most forests in Vermont -- the beginnings of a recovered treasure that we can pass along to the next generation. By making a decision today to allow these stands to grow old, you have the power to give future generations the gift of experiencing something that's rare today: a truly old Vermont forest. When you make a visionary decision NOT to cut these stands now, my daughter, just starting elementary school, could experience the magic of an expansive Vermont forest 200-300 years old -- something you and I will never experience in our lifetimes.

I invite the Green Mountain National Forest to be visionary. You manage exceptional areas that are worthy of national attention and protection -- places you and the nation can be proud of if they are spared the blade. You have a powerful choice ahead of you, and I encourage you to recognize the long-term values of protection over near-term cuts.

Thank you for considering these comments, and for keeping me informed as plans progress.