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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it May Concern:

I am submitting these comments with the hope that you will once again reconsider and significantly modify your plans for the Tarleton Integrated Resource Project (IRP). I submitted my objection to the project during the most recent prior objection period and appreciate the responses and modifications USFS has now proposed. I, however, continue to believe that my initial concerns have not been fully addressed and am resubmitting my initial objection, as follows. It is my sincere hope that USFS will reconsider and amend the Forest Plan and designate the Lake Tarleton land as a Scenic Area.

As outlined below, I am a longtime resident/landowner in the area and was deeply involved in the fundraising efforts that enabled the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) to acquire the subject land. I am actively involved in protecting the quality of lake water in our area and I, along with others in our community, care deeply about the scenic wilderness and peaceful environment we treasure here. I support the efforts others are taking to consider designating our area as a "Scenic Area," with the goal of protecting our unique and beautiful lakes and the surrounding forest.

I first came to the Lake Tarleton area in 1988. My husband's parents had worked in public relations with the Lake Tarleton Club, and we were eager to see the lake. We were awed by the wild and untouched beauty of the area and began renting a home on Lake Armington later that year. We purchased that home in 1993, after considering buying undeveloped land on both Lake Armington and Lake Tarleton. We knew about the large parcels of land that had changed ownership over the years and had concerns about what development might take place, but hoped for the best-that the area would continue to remain pristine, remote and scenically breathtaking. Despite living and working full-time in Boston and raising three boys, our home here in Piermont became our refuge and a center of life for our family.

I joined the Board of the Lake Armington Association (LAA) during the 1990s as I was committed to conservation of our lake and the surrounding area. Over the years, I volunteered to participate in our Weed Watcher Program, a program sponsored by the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to protect NH waterbodies from invasive species. I now lead our group of volunteers for that program. I am also the LAA representative to the NH Loon Preservation Committee.

I was an LAA Board member when Trust for Public Lands (TPL) approached us to ask the LAA to be involved in fundraising to enable WMNF and the State of NH to acquire the 5,300 acre privately held land, which, in part, is the subject of the Tarleton IRP. Learning that the land surrounding Tarleton and her sister lakes would be preserved seemed like a miracle and the LAA committed to the project. We actively solicited our LAA members for donations and I served as Treasurer of the LAA during part of that fund-raising effort. We invited TPL and representatives from the WMNF to speak to our members during our annual meetings to enhance the success of our fundraising efforts. The focus was on conservation, preservation and enhanced recreation. I assure you that there was never any mention that the WMNF would seek to engage in commercial logging of the area. Sadly, the LAA President and the other Treasurer who led our fund-raising efforts at the time have passed away, but I know that none of us approached our members to ask them to contribute to efforts that would lead to commercial logging activity in our area. We did not ask our members for funds to "provide...a sustainable yield of high-quality forest products." (See p. 5 of the Tarleton IRP) The Tarleton IRP seems to be a betrayal to ours and other's sincere efforts to protect and preserve the Lake Tarleton area; we did not expend our efforts to be a source of funds for the USDA.

I have no special training in forest or water quality sciences, but I understand that the benefits of logging forests is a controversial topic and there is no clear right or wrong answer. I do know that Lake Tarleton and Lake Armington are uniquely clean and free of invasive species. I've communicated with the LAA contact at NH DES over the years as part of my weed watching efforts and have come to understand that the unique chemical composition of our lakes seems to act as a buffer against invasive species. While many nearby lakes are clogged by Eurasian Milfoil and other non-native invasives, our lakes have none.

Tarleton and her sister lakes should be a treasured resource. In its recent efforts to monitor PFAS levels in NH lakes, the NH DES directed its investigator, Weston Solutions, to conduct electrofishing here citing the lakes as "Reference Waterbodies" that they expected would have the lowest PFAS levels in the state. That was the information given to me by the individuals conducting the electrofishing when I ran into them on Lake Armington and Lake Tarleton two and a half years ago and confirmed by NHDES. Weston was having trouble catching enough fish (they fished on both lakes for five days) and it seems that they were unable to include Lake Tarleton. Here's a link to the results: <https://www4.des.state.nh.us/nh-pfas-investigation/wp-content/uploads/2020-lake-fish-water-sediment-PFAS-report.pdf> It seems illogical that NH would cite the lakes as a uniquely clean and free from contaminants and the USDA would choose to engage in activity that would pose a threat to that status. Logging near the shores of Lake Tarleton creates a risk of runoff and erosion that could affect weed growth and lake composition. It is not a risk worth taking. It is neither reasonable nor legal. The Lake Katherine boat launch and shoreline could benefit from improvements that are proposed in the Tarleton IRP. Historic apple orchards could benefit from routine maintenance. Small tree plantations of non-native species on former state lands could be restored to more natural conditions. And yet, none of this reasonable work is considered separately from the harmful commercial logging that is proposed across 900 acres of the Lake Tarleton watershed, jeopardizing the lake's excellent water quality and heightening the risk for sediment pollution, weed and other non-native species invasion, and harmful algal blooms.

Finally, I take issue with the conclusions reached in Intensity Factors 4 and 5 (p.23) regarding effects on the quality of the human environment. I have been fortunate to live full time on Lake Armington for the past three winters and have spent extended periods of time here during the winters since we first purchased our home here. Winter is an exceptionally quiet and peaceful time, but sound seems to travel much more readily once snow and lake ice have settled in and all the leaves are off the trees. Last winter, there was a month-long logging project a bit more than a mile from our home and the noise was loud and very disturbing. The Tarleton IRP logging will no doubt be heard by and disturbing to us and all of our neighbors for several years at least. Again, the USDA conclusion that there would be no significant impacts on the human environment do not seem to be based on reality.

I hope you will reconsider the scope of the proposed project and amend the White Mountain National Forest Management Plan to designate this region as a Scenic Area.