

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/28/2023 4:00:00 AM

First name: Ruth

Last name: M Moscovitch

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Along with my husband, I own a large parcel of land that abuts the Sandwich Habitat Management Unit 2.1 in the White Mountain National Forest, where the USFS has proposed a major logging operation. We placed our parcel of land in a conservation easement with the Lakes Region Conservation Trust in order to preserve the land, the variety of plant and animal life present there, the purity of the streams that cross our property, and, of critical importance, to maintain public access in perpetuity to the trail system maintained by the Wonalancet Out Door Club (WODC). I oppose the logging operation as proposed, as do my neighbors and fellow landowners, for many reasons that we have articulated to the Forest Service. Here let me stress the following points:

1. Density of use by the public for recreation: hiking and camping. Our house sits at the entrance to two of the most hiked trails in the area: the Blueberry Ledge Trail up Mt. Whiteface, and the Dicey Mill trail, up Mt. Passaconway. All year, every season, hikers pass our door. On a good weekend, there will be hundreds of hikers in a single day, but we see hikers every day of the week, and in every season. This is entirely understandable, since the area has two 4000ft. peaks with stunning views and is within an easy drive of the most densely populated part of the country. In the Ferncroft parking lot, we see license plates, not only from the New England states, but from Canada and the entire Northeast. The proposed plan was supposed to consider recreation, but for some reason, the USFS declined to make any provision for recreation - saying that would come separately. This is completely irresponsible. The logging plan does not: provide buffers around hiking trails; does not contain specific plans for the safe passage of hikers through areas being logged or for the safe sharing of the limited parking available for hikers with the passage of logging trucks; does not protect trails from criss-crossing logging roads and skids. These precious hiking trails are maintained at no cost to the government by the volunteers in the WODC. Logging can be done elsewhere - away from these much used and much loved trails.

2. Impact on local roads. The only way to remove the trees that will be cut if the plan goes forward, is through the Ferncroft parking lot and down Ferncroft Road, a dirt road that passes through Albany and Tamworth townships and is maintained at public expense. As noted above, the road and the parking lot are heavily used, not so much by the few of us locals who live here, but by the thousands of visitors who come to hike our trails. They are also important access points for search and rescue operations, which happen every year in hiking and skiing season. How will the road be maintained? How will public safety be managed? The plan makes no provision for these important public issues.

3. Preservation of old growth forests. As President Biden said, in his April 2022 Executive Order on Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies, the federal government should be promoting old growth forests, using traditional indigenous means for preserving healthy forests and fighting fire. The current plan does not give any attention to these, federally mandated, directives. The plan is to cut mature trees. Our woods have just begun to recover from the clearcut done 50 years ago. Mature trees may offer the best monetary return for a logging operation, but at a terrible cost: we lose these trees as seed producers; as habitat for a host of local species; and as carbon sinks. In today's New York Times, there is a report about how our neighbors to the north, in Canada, are using indigenous forest management practices to reduce the danger of runaway forest fires. A key part of their strategy? To leave mature trees in place, since they are less like to provide fuel for wildfires. See: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/27/world/canada/canada-wildfires-kelowna-british-columbia.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20230828&instance_id=101300&nl=todaysheadline®i_id=47968854&segment_id=143057&user_id=cad2f6fd8027337cde8a928fad1b1c37.

I urge the Forest Service to listen to my concerns and those of my neighbors and to take the time to reconsider

the current plan. The entire Sandwich range should be protected wilderness; there are plenty of private and remote public places where logging can be done without endangering this beautiful and special location we all love.