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Organization:

Title:

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my opposition to the "Sandwich Vegetation Management Project #57392" as currently proposed. The Forest Service's draft Environmental Assessment released July 31 calls for the operation to begin as soon as late 2023 and to continue for 5-10 years, covering 648 acres, and removing six million board feet. I own a home in Wonalancet, NH and have been hiking the Sandwich Range from the Ferncroft trailhead my entire life. The planned harvest will severely impact this precious area beloved by generations of hikers.

As I understand it, logging trucks and other equipment will enter and leave the forest through the Ferncroft parking lot, which would be partially closed for months during logging operations. Hiking and skiing trails will be affected by road construction and truck traffic and with heavy machinery and skid trails crossing trails. Ten heavily machined log landing sites will be scattered throughout the area. Popular trails will be closed. One planned harvest area is immediately adjacent to the Liberty and Brook Trails on Mt Chocorua and includes a large prescribed fire area. The plan does not include any forest buffer between the designated harvest area and the hiking trails.

The proposed operation shows little recognition of the many concerns raised last year during the scoping process. Flooding and erosion will be severe given the increased frequency of major rain events caused by climate change. There will be damage to threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species. And the climate impact of the operation has not been adequately assessed.

The revenue generated by this operation will pale in comparison to the damage the operation will cause to the environment and to a recreational resource with immense value to tens of thousands of users. The U.S. Forest Service needs to do far more work to explain to the citizens it serves why this harvest is warranted.

Sincerely,

David Loughran