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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Jim Innes, District Ranger

USDA Forest Service Saco Ranger District

Mr. Innes:

I write to express my concern over the plans and proposed implementation of the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project.

-- First, I am rather bemused by the title, which is certainly more innocuous-sounding than the actual project. With a target of six million board feet of timber to be extracted, this is clearly more than "vegetation management".

-- While the target harvest is large, I must question how much revenue the Forest Service will actually see when all is said and done. At current timber prices, and the costs of road building, felling and transportation of logs, it is difficult to see how you will realize a return on the investment that justifies the inevitable disruption to the forest and the communities affected. I have been told that in fact much of the timber to be harvested will not be lumber quality, but rather will end up as pulp, a significant reduction in value to USFS.

-- The USFS mandate is for "multiple use, sustained yield". This area already achieves the former through visits from hikers, campers, skiers and snowmobile riders. Moreover, the trails and roads are maintained through successful public-private partnerships with numerous organizations and individuals. Regarding the latter, please help me understand how the long-standing recreational uses of the forests in this area are not in fact providing a 'sustained yield' in a non-monetized sense of the term. Do you really want to damage these relationships and the good will toward the USFS that has been built over decades?

-- The comment period for this project should be extended and include at least one well-advertised public forum. Communication of the plan has been insufficient and can be easily improved.

-- Information I have seen to date offers no cost/benefit analysis, and such a study must include recreational benefits and costs to the local communities. Where is the discussion of the impacts of the logging operations on site, the roads to be cut into the mountains and the traffic associated with all the above?

Thank you for your time and attention in addressing the concerns expressed by residents and property owners of Wonalancet, Tamworth, Sandwich and other areas of the Mount Washington Valley.

Grant Prillaman