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Comments: I am opposed to the planned Sandwich Vegetation Management Project.

One major reason for my opposition is that the justification has omitted any consideration of the climate benefits of leaving these forest tracts intact. Large-scale logging and clear-cutting, such as is planned in this project, result in substantial loss of forest carbon sequestration potential, particularly in the case of older forests such as these. This is an important ecological service of these forests, which has not been considered at all in the environmental assessment. This needs to be addressed.

A second reason for my opposition is the claim in justifying the project, that clearing is needed to provide a diversity of landscapes for wildlife. This justification does not consider the substantial clearing that has been conducted in the region due to a power line over Sandwich Notch, currently under reconstruction, as well as the cumulative effect of significant recent clearing and development on Mt. Israel Rd. and elsewhere, in addition to natural clearings provided by wetlands. The wildlife in this area is not constrained by the National Forest boundaries, and the pre-existence of substantial cleared areas adjacent to this area and outside of the National Forest needs to be considered as important contextual facts, in light of this justification based on wildlife needs.

Finally, I am concerned that this project will represent an opening to unconstrained logging in this portion of the White Mountain National Forest. Once it starts, I've seen no indication that there are time limits over which the project will be conducted. That suggests that once approved this may evolve into an open-ended mandate to harvest timber in these areas. Given the lack of clear time constraints, and the construction of permanent logging infrastructure (roads and timber landings) what is going to prevent this project from evolving into unconstrained logging along the entire front of the Sandwich Range? Such constraints are not adequately or clearly delineated in the Draft Environmental Assessment or other documents. The lack of clearly stated constraints makes me sceptical that the scope of this project will be respected.