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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I strongly oppose the timber cut in the Sandwich Range as it was described in the Environmental Assessment

1) I now understand why I did not hear of this proposal. You advertise in the Union Leader rather than in the free papers that citizens normally read or the Exchanges that we consult on line. Your use of this paper rather than the ones local citizens read is an indication of your desire to avoid involving the public. I also contacted the head of the Tamworth Conservation Commission and that group has not been involved in this project nor asked to comment despite the fact that you include their name on p. 30.

2) The assessment is based on a 2005 plan for the Forest which is out of date in two very important respects. It may be out of date for other reasons but I do not have a degree in forest management and so can't comment on those. First of all the understanding of the effects of climate change has vastly increased in the last twenty years. Climate change gets only a very cursory paragraph on p. 25. It is much clearer now that the eastern forests are critical to the United States meeting its carbon reduction goals. The use of clear cuts, "almost clear cuts" and prescribed burns have no business given what we have learned lately about the dangers of climate change. This environmental assessment is based on a belief that the quality of the timber harvest is the major goal of the forest service. If that was the case in 2005, it is no longer a viable basis for an environmental assessment.

3) The region to be cut borders on a designated Wilderness area. The Sandwich range and adjoining state and private forests is a critical habitat for fauna.

4) The assessment is also based on an assumption that recreation is a very minor activity in the White Mountain National Forest. Again, the assessment probably wasn't accurate in 2005 but it certainly is not viable right now. Since the pandemic, recreational use has increased exponentially. Your plan to close half of the Ferncroft and Liberty parking lots is totally unacceptable. Ferncroft's lot was just expanded because the use has increased so markedly.

Also unacceptable is the lack of plans to use buffers to protect the current hiking and skiing trails. There is no reason that you can't shield the public from the mess that logging creates. I walk those trails multiple times a week and your saying that it is a "short term" effect does not take into account the negative effect felt in the next five to ten years. Recreation is the primary economic driver of our economy, and people do not come here from all over the eastern coast to see a logging operation.

In summary, I see this project as not only being unnecessary but also very detrimental to our meeting essential climate goals and to maintaining the economy of this region. I also see your actions to invite public comment as not being genuine. You may meet the bureaucratic demands, but to many of us, they were designed to make sure the public has as little time as possible to get to know about this project, to organize getting expert advice, and to make our voice heard.