

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/29/2023 4:00:00 AM

First name: L

Last name: Keith

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To: Jim Innes, District Manager

USDA Forest Service, Saco Ranger District

33 Kancamagus Highway

Conway, NH 03818

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my strong objections to the proposed Sandwich Vegetation Management Project. Given the adjacent Wilderness Area, Scenic Area and extensive conservation lands, this is an inappropriate, commodity-focused management plan. Instead, the USFS should be producing a long term management plan that prioritizes the scenic, recreational, ecosystem and climate benefits unique to this area.

My family has lived in Tamworth NH for over 100 years, and participated in decades of efforts to preserve the very special scenic, recreational and ecological character of the region. I am familiar with all three of the proposed logging areas. The proposed project threatens all of these special attributes and in addition completely disregards current scientific and USFS consensus on how our mature forests should be managed in the face of climate change.

The project proposes unnecessary clear cuts and patch cuts, and promises significant disruption and degradation of popular recreation trails and unique ecosystems. In addition, the heavy truck traffic necessary to service this project is completely ill suited to the narrow, dirt residential roads that in some areas provide the only access to the project sites. (In my neighborhood, this is particularly true where post-Covid foot traffic has increasing dramatically from Chocorua Lake Conservancy public areas.)

Most surprising, the plan does not recognize the importance of these mature forests in strengthening ecosystem and biological resilience in the face of climate change impacts, nor the scientific consensus that mature and old growth forests absorb and store more carbon than young, growing forests. The USFS just recently released a proposed rule prioritizing and protecting mature and old growth forests for their clear climate benefits. This plan does not take into account up-to-date climate scientific findings, including those recognized by USFS.

I sincerely hope that the Forest Service will reconsider this plan and its focus on "harvest" opportunity, and revise it to suit the very special character of this region and these sites.

Many thanks for your consideration.