

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/30/2023 4:00:00 AM

First name: Amy

Last name: Berrier

Organization: Tamworth Outing Club

Title: secretary

Comments: Tamworth Outing Club

PO Box 311, Tamworth NH 03886

Tamworthoutingclub.org

Providing community recreation in Tamworth since 1935

Comment submission regarding the proposed "Sandwich Vegetation Management Project"

August 30, 2023

The Tamworth Outing Club (TOC) is a nonprofit community organization, dedicated to providing recreational opportunities for the people of Tamworth for nearly 90 years. A major focus of the TOC since its founding has been to support downhill, backcountry, and cross-country skiing for people of all ages. For many years, this has included maintaining and grooming cross-country ski trails in Wonalancet that now total approximately 10 kilometers. In 2021, the club raised over \$36,000 from generous private donors and the Tamworth Foundation to purchase modern grooming equipment in order to provide ongoing trail maintenance. The Ferncroft groomed trail system is unique as a community asset, with access offered free of charge to anyone.

The TOC trail system is maintained primarily on private land, but also includes a portion of Springbrook Road (#237). Nearly all skiers and snowshoers using the trails park at the Ferncroft hiker parking area. As noted in the Environmental Assessment (EA), this parking area is heavily used in all seasons. The proposed action would close half of the area during logging operations, but no alternative parking is proposed. In fact, the EA states the "project design features would minimize adverse disruption of recreational use." The "project design feature" referred to is closure of half of the parking lot. Clearly, this would disrupt recreational use both by hikers and skiers. Local residents have had serious issues with overflow parking in all seasons for years now, due to heavy use of the trail system. To have the Ferncroft parking area cut in half and deny access to the public - even periodically - is unacceptable.

The document also states that there would be no short- or long-term impact on recreational experiences. Based on our many years in Wonalancet, we strongly disagree with this statement. Our direct experience, as managers of this trail network, is that the recreational use of the trails has greatly increased in recent years and certainly since the 2005 Forest Plan. The proposed project should take this into account. How does the Forest Service propose to notify skiers and hikers of trail or parking closures? Many come from a distance to use this area and will not be aware of closures until they arrive at Ferncroft. Thousands of visitors come to Wonalancet from near and far to hike the mountains year-round and to ski in winter. Any restriction to recreational trails during the proposed logging will have a profoundly negative effect on recreation for Tamworth's residents and visitors, potentially for many years to come.

The EA states that operations in units 35, 36, 39, 40 and 46 would take place in summer, fall, and winter and the overall project would occur over a period of five to ten years. Aside from the serious parking problem in Ferncroft, which the project would aggravate without a proposed solution, it will be very difficult for the TOC to continue grooming its ski trails during this project. We are able to access the trails from private land for grooming purposes, but it would be difficult if not impossible to groom the system without using Springbrook Road. Although the USFS proposal indicates that road may be open on weekends, grooming activities cannot be limited

to those two days, as it must happen shortly after snowfall. The presence of logging equipment in the area would also present potential barriers to grooming and create safety issues for our maintenance personnel and many recreational users.

The TOC has, for the past two years, held sled dog activities in Wonalancet, since these historic races can no longer be held on or near Chocorua Lake. TOC's new races and related activities - held in cooperation with North Country Mushers and the New England Sled Dog Club - have proven very popular, and we expect they will continue to grow in future years. Without the ability to groom and use our ski trail network, it is likely these activities could not be held -- an additional loss to our recreational offerings to the community.

As an organization responsible for the safety and enjoyment of all trail users, TOC is also concerned about the potential for erosion on the many trails in the Ferncroft area, exacerbated by the increasingly heavy rains that New Hampshire now experiences. Trails for cross country skiing must be kept dry, smooth, and obstacle free for the safety of our grooming crew, as well as anyone using these trails. Many people have worked diligently for years to keep these trails in excellent condition for a variety of recreational pursuits.

We, the Tamworth Outing Club, request that you take our concerns regarding the disruption of access, maintenance, and use of this popular recreational trail system very seriously as you weigh the environmental and community impact of this proposed project.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Tamworth Outing Club Board of Directors

Wyatt Berrier, president

Dylan Alden, vice-president

Teresa Fournier, treasurer

Amy Berrier, secretary

Suzanne Balomenos-Morgan

Barb Bloomberg

Rob Farnum

Mark Fournier

Pam Hayden

Kent Hemingway, Jr.

Kit Morgan

Sharon Morrison