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First name: Elonide

Last name: Semmes

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Representatives,

I am writing with deep concerns about the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project #57392 and my opposition to the plan. My residence is on Chinook Trail where my family's land abuts the White Mountain National Forest. I proudly tell people that my backyard is the White Mountain National Forest.

For more than 30 years, I have walked the paths in these forests, bird watched and loved nothing more than to get to the top of Paugus or Chocorua. I frequently answer questions from hikers and give them my two cents on why they are about to enter a very special place. My large family joins me every summer and everyone finds the White Forest simply magical.

My original roots are in the Sangre de Cristo mountains and forests of Colorado where I have seen good forest management in action to help combat beetle kill and forest fires. I do believe in forest management. But there I experienced the forest service talking with people directly impacted and there was a very different level of transparency. I remember walking as a young girl with my dad and a group of landowners and the forest service representatives to discuss their thinking. There was a healthy back and forth but an atmosphere of deep respect on both sides.

I also come from a family of private foresters who have spent their years managing forests on behalf of large landholders. So again I believe in forest management but not in the haphazard fashion of Sandwich Vegetation Management Project #57392.

The manner in which Project #57392 has been handled has broken my trust in the Forest Service. A trust that existed for 65 years. Many in our community including me sent concerns last year and they have simply been ignored or dismissed.

It is impossible to get behind a plan with such little clarity. Why do you have studies that you are referencing but not providing? What is in those studies that you don't want us to scrutinize? Why force us to get the information through the Freedom of Information Act? Why after a year are there not more answers and more specificity? How can you even bid this project out without specificity and a timetable? What about the small road to Ferncroft that you propose using? Are you leaving the bill with our local towns to repair forcing them to raise our taxes? There are countless unanswered questions from last year and now.

It feels like you are trying to pull something over on us that will have a drastic impact on our community. I live here. I am concerned about the logging trucks barrelling down the road in our neighborhood (yes we have kids up here). I am concerned that we will lose our trails for hiking. I am concerned about the impact on our water. And I simply don't see a clear vision, timetable and course of action for this plan.

So I wholeheartedly oppose this plan as it is incomplete and has not addressed the concerns of the community that we raised a year ago. There are serious threats to our forest, our quality of life and the environment that this plan simply does not address. Come to our community, sit down with us. Walk the land and discuss the vision. Don't hide behind Zoom.

Elonide Caldwell Semmes