

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

First name: John

Last name: Emerson

Organization: Emerson Law LLC

Title: Owner

Comments: August 30, 2023

Jim Innes, District Ranger

USDA Forest Service Saco Ranger District

33 Kancamagus Highway

Conway, NH 03818

Re: Sandwich Vegetation Management Project

Dear Mr. Innes:

I write in opposition to the above-referenced plan to log 650 acres of land in the Sandwich Range for several reasons.

First, my family property in Tamworth has a view directly towards what would be the affected area. It is a view that has remained largely unchanged since my great grandfather built our house in 1906. The majestic view, and the Range itself, are an integral part of our family history. It is the backdrop of a thousand photos, it is the setting in which I remember my mother, it is the subject of the prayers my grandfather said to us at bedtime. There has to be a reasonable alternative, including an alternative that involves no action whatsoever.

That is the second reason. The law requires the Forest Service to propose a "reasonable" slate of alternatives to the Project as described, and I am not aware that any alternatives have been proposed. At a minimum, one of these alternatives should be a choice to take no action at all. It appears to me that the Forest Service cannot legally proceed with this Project in the absence of evidence that reasonable options have been considered.

Third, in addition to the view that is so personal to my family, I can only imagine the impact stripping that land will have on the ecosystem of the Range. The impact on the numerous species of animals and the indigenous plants - as well as the trees themselves - is wholly offensive and out of step with the vital need to acknowledge climate change and to preserve and protect our frail planet.

It is my understanding that The Northern Long-eared Bat is a federally endangered species that prefers older forests and is assumed to be within the project area. Yet the White Mountain National Forest does not intend to survey for the bats before logging and is planning to log forests when bats would be most vulnerable, not hibernating for the winter. The proposed logging also threatens to introduce invasive species, diminish area water quality, and worsen the risk of flooding. In 2022, President Biden issued an Executive Order your agency to conserve (not destroy) mature forests just like those designated for harvest in the Project. Instead of racing headlong to cut these climate-critical forests, the Forest Service should allow them to grow old.

I am asking that you please reconsider, actually scrap, the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project.

Very truly yours,

John F. Emerson