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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service,

I am writing in opposition to the planned Sandwich Vegetation Management Project #57392. I echo the comments of many others who have already written.

Having been involved with the Chocorua Mountain Club, as a member and leader my whole life, I have respect for the foresters and volunteer coordinators I have worked with over the years. We maintain 7 trails on Chocorua and Paugus, and the Club used to maintain even more trails and shelters. I realize that the FS must balance many competing demands on the forest; however, this proposal has too many negatives.

My concerns are:

It is challenging to figure out from the documentation what exactly is going to happen and when, and the comment period is very short. When I met with FS this winter, it sounded as though nothing was going to happen for a few years. Findings of 'no significant impact' on many environmental and recreational areas just seems wrong.

Chocorua Mountain, Mt. Paugus, and Lake are iconic, stunningly beautiful, pristine (since the last century's logging) areas. They are fragile environments, include designated Wilderness and sensitive environmental areas. The lake water is exceptionally clean and clear. It takes decades if not a century for these sensitive areas to recover from fire, logging, road building, culvert making, herbicide and heavy equipment use. The proposed actions are in and next to these sensitive and vital areas. The proposed actions are highly impactful ones - over 1,000 acres with clear cuts and burning.

Mt. Chocorua is hiked by thousands each year, including many who hike the mountain year after year. The trails and parking are heavily used. The proposed cuts and burns are right in the middle of two of the most used and beloved trails! Trail use is increasing. Closing half the Liberty Trail parking area would cause significant problems.

The impacts of these cuts and burns will be seen, heard, and felt both while the action is taking place (which is over many years) and for generations afterwards. The plan does not convincingly explain why this area, so rich in mature growth forest, beautiful scenery, and devoted recreational use must be logged so devastatingly. Clear cuts, group cuts, burning, -they remove all vegetation- erosion will definitely be a problem; and heavy rain events are increasing, further contributing to the severity of accompanying erosion on trails, access roads, and mountainside.

The impact on trails and hiking will be hugely significant. There is no mention of realistic buffers protecting scenery and trails along hiking routes. The suggested protection of isolated trees, pools, streams, habitats are inadequate in the proposal. The transportation plan requires the upgrading of many faded roads throughout the area, which will also impact trails, wildlife and scenery.

Mature forests do provide diversity - they store a lot of carbon, provide certain types of habitat, and they take a long time to form. They are worth protecting.

Many people have mentioned that the proposal is based on goals of a Forest Plan almost 20 years old, that the proposed cutting is ill-conceived, poorly planned, and lacking in important information; that it seems to value

lumber above all else, that it does not value the historic trails and clubs who maintain them, does not sufficiently consider climate change or environmental impacts, does not value the magnitude and quality of the recreational use of the area, and does not value the views of Mt. Chocorua and from Mt. Chocorua. (An appendix says that 'the only impacted view point is Mt. Chocorua' - the top of Mt. Chocorua. I'd say that's an important one!!)

I agree and cannot support the proposed actions as currently proposed.