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Title:

Comments: I am commenting on behalf of RESTORE: The North Woods, a nonprofit organization with hundreds of members and supporters in New Hampshire and across New England. These people regularly visit and recreate in the White Mountain National Forest. I wish to register our strong opposition to the entire Lost River Integrated Resource Project #63401.

As acknowledged by the Forest Service, "The primary focus of the Lost River Project is to implement the management direction in the 2005 WMNF Land and Resource Management Plan." This plan was grossly inadequate and misguided when it was finalized 18 years ago. Today, the plan is even more deficient, since it fails to address climate change, increasing species extinctions, and loss of natural green spaces for people, which are crises of global importance.

Because it is tiered to the obsolete and flawed 2005 forest plan, the Lost River Integrated Resource Project reflects long-discredited and destructive priorities. These priorities include the scientifically debunked ideas that logging improves "forest health," that clearing forests to create artificial early-successional habitat is necessary and beneficial to wildlife, and that logging increases "resilience" to help forests to adapt to disturbances.

The most egregious feature of this ill-conceived project is that it would liquidate and degrade mature and potential old-growth forests that we need to protect to mitigate climate change and ensure the protection of native biodiversity. The project completely disregards the recent recognition by the U.S. Forest Service of the vital importance of these forests. This deficiency is particularly egregious because the industrial logging that the project would implement would devastate intact forests on the eastern slopes of Mt. Moosilauke, which is within an inventoried roadless area (IRA).

This IRA should be designated as wilderness and serve as a core wildland that could be connected to other intact forests. Instead, the Forest Service proposes to log and fragment the adjacent forests, replacing natural, interior forest corridors with landscapes that are denuded and degraded by industrial logging.

We urge the Forest Service to cancel the Lost River Integrated Resource Project. This logging project is unnecessary, harmful to climate and biodiversity, destructive to recreational values and, because the timber is of relatively low market value it would no doubt require major public financial subsidies to implement it.

The U.S. Forest Service should shift from its obsolete and harmful mid-20th century focus on producing timber to benefit the forest products industry to protecting the White Mountain National Forest to store carbon, provide diverse natural habitats, and offer recreation and other benefits of intact forested to the millions of people in the region. This means focusing on protecting intact forests, not logging them for the production of wood and fiber.

If the Forest Service cannot or will not protect our White Mountain National Forest we, the people who own the forest, will need to look to another federal agency that will do so. The most appropriate alternative is to transfer these lands to the National Park Service as a White Mountain National Park and Preserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lost River Integrated Resource Project. We welcome any questions regarding our comments.