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Comments: Dear Forest Service,

Please do not follow through with the plan to conduct logging in the Sandwich Range. This plan could be in direct conflict with the 2022 signed Executive Order 14072 calling for the protection of old-growth and mature forests on federal public lands. Any action undertaken in the Sandwich Range should be consistent with the executive order to protect and preserve America's mature forests, which excel at removing carbon from the atmosphere, support biodiversity, and enhance water quality for downstream communities.

In addition, while the USFS acknowledges what we all know: the project area has very high recreational use and value. But the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) says almost nothing about the impact of the proposed logging action on hiking trails in the Sandwich Range, saying it will be addressed in a separate report, yet to be filed. The proposed logging would take place along or very near at least four trails in the Ferncroft area, four trails in the Mt. Chocorua area, and in the Guinea Hill area near Mt. Israel. USFS proposes "buffers" along these trails of just 33 to 66 feet-close enough for trail users to have a front-row view of clear cuts. The Draft EA also fails to address the impacts of noise, trail closures, truck traffic, parking availability, etc., for recreational users of the forest.

Climate Change and Carbon: The Draft EA states the carbon effects of this project will be negligible and inconsequential. That claim is both unconvincing and unsubstantiated.

Consideration of Alternatives: Environmental Assessments usually include several possible action alternatives, but this one does not. The USFS is operating from an obsolete forest plan, in which forests are maintained for the purpose of continuing commercial harvest. The USFS should consider meaningful, good-faith alternatives to commercial logging, especially in light of the executive order regarding mature forests, but also new science and new ecologically-informed thinking around the preservation and maintenance of mature forests for carbon reduction, climate goals, and recreation.

Please reconsider the proposal for the Sandwich range and either substantially cut back or cancel the logging plans.

Regards,

Annie Madden