

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/23/2023 10:34:37 PM

First name: Natalia

Last name: Egan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I write to request the United States Forest Service (USFS) halt or reconfigure its proposed Sandwich Range Vegetation Management Plan (Project #57392). I have grave concerns about the necessity of this project and outline a few of them below for consideration:

*The plan as written uses outdated information (from 2005) as basis for a seemingly destructive plan which will impact local wildlife, our beloved forest, and contribute negatively to our carbon footprint. I ask that the USFS commit to a full Environmental Assessment of this project before taking any action.

*The project as proposed does not consider President Biden's 2022 Executive Order 14072, calling for the protection of old-growth and mature forests on federal public lands, such as the White Mountain National Forest and the Sandwich Range. When posed the question, the Forest Service staff noted they have not been provided with guidance regarding this executive order, definitions, etc. Therefore, the executive order is not being incorporated into the proposed logging plan. I find this to be alarming. It is premature to act blindly and without supplementary information to expedite a project against clear public opposition. Furthermore, The USFS is required by federal environmental law to consider and offer "reasonable alternatives" to its proposed actions but has not sufficiently done so to date. I request that a robust and thoughtful reasonable alternative, or several, be proposed and be based on recent science and understanding of meaningful and beneficial forest management solutions.

*The field trip to the Fernshaw trails in Wonalancet conveniently provided the public with the least destructive and invasive view of the project. This not only was a misrepresentation of the broader project but as an observer, seemed to take the focus away from larger, more destructive activities outlined in the Draft Environmental Assessment and a lack of justification for claiming "no significant impact" in the DEA. Even so, the information provided at the field trip still showcased how the visual impact of the project will evolve and ultimately destroy the natural beauty of the area, a favorite local and tourist destination. Many questions about the project itself could not be answered "until we get into the forest," underlying a lack of understanding, or perhaps reliance on outdated information, of what is best for the forest management of this area. Moving forward with a plan which will impact the region for decades to come without careful consideration of new climate guidance and potential negative impacts of acting on old information seems short-sighted. It raises the alarm bell for me and many members of our community.

*The communities of Tamworth and Sandwich depend economically on access to our pristine trails and myriad outdoor opportunities for recreational activities. Many people, both locals and visitors frequent these areas to find peace in nature, precisely in the swaths of land and trails where the USFS plans to alter. It's a huge part of why many of us choose to live here. There is no indication of any local benefit coming out of this project as addressed in the Draft Environmental Assessment. The USFS notes it will address this in a separate report and at a later date, however, this ignores a key piece of our local economy. It is imperative for the public to understand the potential impact trail closures, truck traffic, accessibility, parking, and noise will have on our communities, livelihood and tourist offerings. I ask that no action be taken until such a report is produced and the residents of this area receive ample notice and opportunity to respond to its findings.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Kind Regards,

Natalia Egan

Resident - Tamworth, NH