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First name: Jerry

Last name: Curran

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Ranger Innes,

During a recent tour of the proposed Sandwich Project, a teacher asked why the Sandwich National Forest needed to be managed, but the Sandwich Wilderness did not. Both forests looked the same. The ranger couldn't answer the question, pivoted and assured her they couldn't log in the Wilderness area. We both know the real answer to her question. The White Mountain National Forest doesn't need "chainsaw management." In fact, there is no scientific data supporting the need for "chainsaw management." Quite to the contrary, data indicates the healthiest northeastern forests, like the Sandwich Wilderness, are those left untouched and allowed to mature naturally. Additionally, mature forests sequester more carbon.

The Sandwich, Pemigewasset and Dry River Wildernesses are the jewels of the White Mountain National Forest. They are world renowned. Visiting European hikers in the Whites have explained to me, the Alps are beautiful, but they are "civilized parks." The Whites have Wilderness! The USFS has done a great job ensuring those precious Wilderness jewels are protected. Could they and should they be expanded? Why haven't I heard the USFS advocate for expanding Wilderness? Your plan for "Clear-Cut Management" right to edge of the Wilderness ensures expansion will never happen.

Every Clear-Cut immediately increases carbon pollution and immediately exacerbates the Climate Emergency. Clear-cutting stops carbon sequestration of mature trees and releases carbon stored in the soil. Mature forests are one of our best hopes to mitigate the Climate Emergency.

The Trees in the White Mountains have much more value if allowed to mature. The blight of logging will drive tourists away. Hiding the cuts doesn't help. This is a massive 5 to 10 year industrial operation happening in the place where people go for nature and peace.

So why, contrary to scientific consensus, does the USFS insist on managing the forest with chainsaws? The Forest Service has claimed the income from logging will help with infrastructure for hiking and tourism. We both know this is not true. The Forest Service loses millions of taxpayer dollars on every logging project. Logging companies who lobby Congress to get what they want are the only ones who make money. Many of these companies have foreign ownership.

Opposition to this project will not go away. We've tolerated the continuing destructive Forest Service logging in the past. Maybe not objecting enough to the last projects has emboldened the Forest Service. This blatant destruction of the Sandwich Range is a bridge too far. I've never seen as many people opposed to a project as this one. I believe the public outcry will be unprecedented and relentless.

Everything I've said, you know to be true. As a District Ranger you have almost unchallenged control. You can protect our mountains. I say our mountains because they belong to the people not to you. The World has changed. Your past management practices need to be updated. The Climate Emergency and Species Extinction necessitate change and yet you cling to destructive logging. You are our steward with a massive responsibility. Please do your job and protect our precious White Mountains. Please stop the Sandwich Vegetation Management Project.

Jerry Curran

Conway, NH