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Comments: Hello,

This project, as outlined, will not meet it's stated goal of increasing biodiversity and climate resilience in the national forest system. It risks doing the opposite. New Hampshire forests are facing a crisis as the result of many generations of over harvesting. While logging can be done responsibly, it unavoidably removes the resources forests require in order to recover. In a strong forest this would not be an issue but forests across the US are threatened on multiple fronts.

The forests around my own home are currently being ravaged by an infestation of invasive jumping worms, many of them spread by my own family's equipment before we realized the extent of the problem. Jumping worms change the chemical make up of the soil they occupy making it difficult for saplings and native ground cover plants such as partridge berry and bearberry to grow. They spread mostly in the dirt collected by the treads of heavy equipment but their eggs can be transported by foot traffic as well. With the increasingly mild winters there is no safe time to use heavy equipment without risking the spread of invasive species, every piece you use will need to be cleaned unless you are lucky enough to be working on frozen ground. Hence the need to keep operations small. Sadly, even planting new trees and ground cover plants risks contamination. This infestation leaves vast dead spots where the forest is unable to recover from logging.

Where forests can still recover, they require a lot of dead wood to do so. The die offs caused by other insect invasions (emerald ash borers for example) actually generate the material necessary for regrowth. Standing and fallen deadwood provides vital habitat for many species of birds, bats, and native insects as well as slowly decomposing their nutrients back into the soil. Cutting down trees before they can die or removing dead trees may make the forest look better to humans but actually takes away an important resource. Furthermore, the live trees that loggers prefer to harvest tend to be the ones needed to shelter future generations. Not all tree saplings require older shelter trees to thrive but many New Hampshire staples, such as maples and oaks, do. The reason NH forests are so vulnerable to climate change and invasive species is because they are made up of young trees. Regular cycles of logging have left us with sickly single generations of trees, destroying the ecosystem that makes forests resilient in the face of change.

Public lands were never meant to be the primary source of our country's timber. Failure to care for our forests has left us in the story state of needing to log what should have been our conservation areas. My family has been in the lumber industry for over 200 years and we now face the possibility of simply no longer having the timber we need to continue. It's unfortunate to be in a situation where we need to forego current harvests in order to invest in recovery but that's the only hope I see for the future of New Hampshire's forestland. Looking at a project of this scale and deeming it "insignificant" is to narrow the definition of significant to a point beneath meaning. There is so much more than carbon containment at stake.

Thanks for reading.