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First name: Michelle
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

As I type that formal greeting, " to whom it may concern" I realize that the topic of trees and forests probably should concern all of us at this time, and I hope that very, very soon it will. It already concerns many of us.

I am a Vermont resident and my house abuts the beautiful Mollie Beattie State Forest. I'm sure many of you will know who Mollie Beattie, former Grafton resident, was in terms of forestry. Back in the day, Mollie may have approved of the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project as it currently stands. But if she were alive today, being the intelligent, environmentally minded woman she was, she would no doubt know about the recent discoveries of scientists such as Suzanne Simard, concerning mycorrhizal networks and their vital importance to forests, as well as their relationship to older trees and old growth areas in forests. She would also be well aware of the challenges of climate change and the need for an examination of current gardening and logging practices to mitigate the harmful impact of rapid climate change. I firmly believe that in 2024, Mollie Beattie would NOT approve of this project.

On Earth Day of 2022, President Biden issued an historic Executive Order directing the US Forest Service to conserve mature and old-growth forests to benefit the climate and biodiversity.

Yet the Telephone Gap project, without significant modification does not honor this executive order, nor does it honor the forests we so desperately need to have a healthier world.

I believe in the use of wood products. I heat my home primarily with wood and purchase wood products. I am not opposed to logging. Yet I have watched large swaths of land in Grafton be clearcut in the last few years (mostly privately owned) by a community that voted down a wind project to "save our ridgelines". Far more wood than is needed for everyone in Grafton to use for heating-and most of that lumber was removed from the area, enriching large land owners and large logging companies, not the local providers of wood I deal with for my purchases. Perhaps a view is more important that the environment to many of these folks, even though the wind towers would have disturbed far less forest than is currently being logged around here and would have provided another renewable source of energy. If the logging doesn't involve their view, then it doesn't matter, I guess.

With this attitude still prevalent among large private land owners in Vermont, it is even more vital that we do our best to protect public land and forests from ill-advised large logging projects, especially in areas with old trees and areas of old growth forest. It is important for the diversity of our environment and important in combating climate change.

I am in support of Alternative A, No Action for the Telephone Gap Project to allow this area, which already contains older trees, to continue to develop into an old growth resource. I ask you to consider this. In addition, I am in favor of protection of all mature stands over the age of 80 in the Telephone Gap landscape and across the Green Mountain National Forest. This will protect trees, wildlife corridors, water and endangered species such as the Northern Long-eared Bat.

I am still grieving the clear cutting of 30 acres near my home, on private property I was allowed to hike on and enjoy for nearly 30 years. I would say I knew the forest much better than the absentee owner who now lives in South Africa, and I was grateful for the opportunity to have time in this gorgeous area. It's all gone now, never to return in my lifetime to what it was. It was that owner's right to hire a large logging company to clearcut this area, reducing much of the wood to chips-as I saw from the staging area that was very close to my house. But that

doesn't mean it was right in terms of the environment.

Please, let's protect what forest land we can protect. I urge you to amend this project.

Sincerely,

Michelle Dufort