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First name: Lisa

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Organization: Chittenden Planning Commission

Title: vice-chair

Comments: To: USDA Forest Service

99 Ranger Rd.

Rochester, VT. 05767

Attn: Christopher Mattrick, District Ranger

Fax#: (802) 767-4777

RE: Telephone Gap Project

Dear Chris,

The Chittenden Planning Commission (CPC) appreciates all the Forest Service staff who have put so much time and thought into the Telephone Gap project plan and alternatives. You all clearly listened to the public concerns and responded to the hundreds of comments submitted to the initial plan, now putting forward three proposed action alternatives. We understand the research and thinking behind the proposals, and recognize that the science of climate change's impact on forest and environmental health continues to evolve and shape federal policy. Thank you for that work.

The Chittenden Planning Commission's major concern with Alternative A was the scope of the project, with nearly 12,000 acres (roughly one quarter of the size of our town) to be impacted by timber management over the next ten years. In our March 2023 comment letter, we had requested that the US Forest Service hone its priorities for this project so that it impacts less than half of the acreage originally proposed. Though each of the action alternatives proposed includes fewer acres of timber management, the CPC agreed at our April 1, 2024 meeting that, of the options put forward, Alternative D comes closest to reflecting key goals of our Plan, including: "Preserve the rural quality and character of town," and "Conserve and protect natural resources, including water, soils, forests, wildlife, and irreplaceable scenic and natural areas." In addition, Alternative D - by decreasing the total CCF of timber taken, reducing the use of fossil fuel for extraction, reducing the total miles of proposed road construction, and decreasing the number of log landing openings - addresses some possible negative impacts of this project on our town.

Still, 38,895 CCF of commercial logging has a sizable impact, including generating significant fossil fuel emissions through felling, processing, skidding, loading, and hauling. And the vast majority of that will be done in and through Chittenden, impacting air quality, soil health, road safety, and transportation infrastructure. We know the USFS is trying to balance many priorities, and we appreciate your considering our concerns. As the Vermont anthem goes, "These green hills and silver waters are our home."