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First name: Michael

Last name: Bald

Organization: Got Weeds?

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

I have a serious concern that the Green Mountain National Forest is managing more than just its acreage of national forest land. The agency is managing relationships and the notion of scientific integrity and the external input it will or will not accept; it is choosing some stakeholders and denying access to others. This is what exclusion looks like, in both its long-term planning and its subsequent project proposals.

For several years leading up to 2006, the agency prepared a planning document with its established partners, identified stakeholders, members of the public, and national policy guidance.

Compromises were made, and a finalized plan emerged. Those new to the process or just beginning to grasp the nuances of resource management were reassured that they would have more input opportunities in the years ahead and in development stages of the next plan.

But there is no next plan.

The existing plan, beyond even reasonable expiration dates, continues to drive actions and mindsets. The world and society have changed, drastically and powerfully, but the old plan retains its dominion and revered status. Why? Because the special interests have what they want and why open any doors to potential change? They say this, directly, to state legislative committees, emphatically clamoring for special status and the right "to drive the bus." Yes, that may explain it. That may explain why the forest products industry gives no value to other agendas.

The Forest Service appears to do the same. Internally, the notion of a new forest plan to replace the expired, hopelessly out-of-date, 2006 plan must be some kind of joke, but externally the appearance of openness and deep listening solemnly carries on. It truly is a facade, no? There will be no new plan, not for at least another generation, so all those people who've learned so much since 2006 and who commit to keeping up with current events will have no REAL opportunity to chime in again. A complete illusion. Projects will come and go, and the NEPA public engagement box will be checked, and that will be that; thanks for your interest.

This is what exclusion looks like; and this is what broken trust tastes like. Sadly, this abandonment of principles and forsaking of the collaborative approach is occurring at both national and local levels. Revising and evolving forest plan documents allows them to maintain relevance and keeps communities connected and engaged, but that does not happen here in Vermont. Until a full plan revision effort takes place, projects like Telephone Gap are just another brick in the wall.