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Comments: I live in Mendon, VT on land bordered by national forest which is part of the telephone gap forest service project. The area immediately surrounding my land is designated as "sheltered reserve" and my understanding is that the forest service plans to thin that area by 80% to eliminate overcrowding, diseased beech trees, and invasive species. I also understand the forest service plans is to use herbicides on invasives and on the stumps of cut diseased beech to prevent sprouting of those beech thereby stopping them from shading other healthier, more "desirable" new growth. I have multiple concerns with this:

1) Herbicide use of any kind should not be used in any of the project. Herbicides will leach into the soil as runoff when sprayed and as the sprayed plant decomposes. The use of herbicides can have significant known and unknown negative effects on the soil biome resulting in long term change to the forest ecosystem. Additionally herbicides and other pesticides have repeatedly been shown to have adverse effects on pollinators and amphibians and possibly continuing to work their way up the food chain. It would seem that even 60 years after Rachel Carson published "Silent Spring" we still have not learned about the danger of chemicals and our environment.

2) Potable Water is a precious and diminishing resource. The area immediately north of US Route 4 is the source of potable water for most of the homes along that area including mine. Streams, ground water, and runoff from this area feed the Mendon Brook which supplies Rutland City water. My drilled well is downhill and only 50' from the area designated as "sheltered reserve" and there is a spring house on my property which was the source of water for several homes in the area and could be again if needed. This is not an area where any use of pesticide is acceptable. Also, cutting 80% of the forest to create "sheltered reserve" may lead to improved future forest timber harvest; however, it most likely will result in increased runoff and a forest which holds less water and less ground water adding to less drought tolerance and less replenishment of the precious ground water needed for local wells and the Rutland City reservoir.

3) The Current Ecosystem in the "sheltered reserve" area although not producing good forest products is relatively healthy. It is home to a wide variety of birds including turkeys, owls, hawks, crows, hummingbirds, and many species of song birds. The area supports a great variety of native pollinators including innumerable types of bumble bees and butterflies. A large number of amphibians including newts, spotted salamanders, grey tree frogs, peepers, green frogs, bull frogs, and toads inhabit the area. Mammalian wildlife in the area include, chipmunks, rabbits, raccoons, skunks, bobcats, fox, mice, weasel, and the occasional bear. These are just the animals I have observed from my home. I would guess I have missed more than I have witnessed. I'm not sure if the surrounding forest is in late primary succession or secondary succession but though not healthy from the forest service point of view it is evolving naturally after being upset by human intervention. I strongly urge the forest service to allow this area to continue to evolve on its own. A large variety of native trees and shrubs do exist in this area including yellow and black birch, black cherry, red maple, sugar maple, red oak, white oak, black cherry, hop horn beam, beech, white ash, sumac, raspberry, and others I haven't identified. It may not be the forest we would like but it is in a state of balance and will evolve on its own whether or not it is what we want. We may and should try, but I do not think we can succeed in eliminating the beech fungus, emerald ash borer, hemlock adelgid, maple pear thrip, and numerous invasive plant species. We cannot replace nature in achieving a sustainable balance and should allow it to do so.

For the reasons stated above I urge you not to heavily manage this area which is a precious water resource, adjacent to many homes, and has a fairly healthy ecosystem. This is an area which could be lightly managed and left to evolve on its own.

Thank you for your consideration.