

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/8/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Joanna

Last name: Bagnulo

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I would like to express my support Alternative A: No Action for the Telephone Gap Resource Project.

The Telephone Gap project, including this current revision, is based on an outdated forest plan - it is from 2006 (18 years old); however, forest plans for projects are supposed to be 10-15 years old at maximum. If an outdated forest plan is being used, how can the Environmental Impact Statement of the project even be trusted as appropriate? It doesn't make sense. No action should be taken, and this position should be reassessed only under the parameters of an updated forest plan, if and when one is available.

Furthermore, mature forests must be left standing in order to comply with President Biden's executive order to protect them in order to mitigate climate change - this includes much of the Telephone Gap area. While I appreciate that a few acres were dropped from the proposed cut, these amounts are not significant against 12,000 acres. Most stands still proposed for cutting are about 80-150 years old - if these areas don't yet qualify as "mature" or "old growth" for some reason, they will soon, but only if they are left standing.

Finally, the argument that forests need to be cut in order to promote biodiversity is misleading at best. Old forests, including those at Telephone Gap, are complex ecosystems that support a huge variety of plants and wildlife, many of which are threatened with extinction. Creating early successional habitat by cutting these forests mainly benefits non-endangered game species for hunting, while further imperiling the threatened and endangered species who rely on mature forest for continued survival. Therefore, cutting mature forest is not in service of promoting true biodiversity and thus is not justified under said objective.

Yes, we do need timber products in our society. However, we should only be taking what we need, not more. In Vermont and across the country we are cutting more timber than we use, and a lot of it is exported to other countries. Timber harvests from private lands should be able to cover our local needs, and allow us to leave our public forests alone to grow old, which is how they will best serve humans, non-humans, and the planet as a whole into the future. This is the long view.

New England's forests are finally beginning to recover from the devastation wrought upon them since colonization. Can we please allow them to do this, instead of continually repeating the mistakes of the past? Please take Alternative A: No Action on the Telephone Gap Resource Project. The People have spoken and we want our trees left standing. Thank you.