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Title:

Comments: In 2023, I hiked the entire Appalachian Trail. I was dismayed to see areas where they had been logging or controlled burns. They were unsightly and eerily devoid of wildlife. I was delighted with the natural beauty of the Green Mountains. Returning home, I was appalled to learn that the USFS planned to log about 12,000 acres in the Green Mountain National Forest. I urge you to adopt Alternative A in the Preliminary Environmental Assessment and take no action other than performing only routine maintenance.

There are several reasons why I oppose any logging in the GMNF. First, this plan is inconsistent with the Mature and Old Growth Executive Order 14072 issued by President Biden. The Executive Order is forward thinking and based on the latest science. We should protect current old growth forests and encourage the natural development of larger tracts of old growth. As forests evolve over time, natural causes and regeneration will create early successful areas. Ecological engineering is an inappropriate interference with nature.

The goals of the USFS are not consistent with historical land composition. Prior to settlement in the 1600's, the northeast was a northern hardwood forest. To reduce northern hardwood habitats and develop a greater percentage of softwoods or southern species of hardwoods when they have not previously existed here in abundance is unsound. Nature will create disturbance events to promote the regeneration of aspen, birch, and oak.

Second, within the last few years there was a controlled burn in the area of Rochester, which got out of control. It has left an unsightly landscape. Even if a controlled burn is successfully maintained, the mammals, amphibians, birds, and insects living in the burned area are displaced at best, or killed.

Third, the plan calls for construction of less than 26.3 miles of new temporary roads on public and private land. Even though the roads may be temporary, they would compact the soil, thereby damaging the underground network of a healthy habitat. There should be no logging in areas that are currently roadless.

Fourth, the plan does not provide for adequate buffers from existing streams, vernal pools, ponds, lakes, or legal trails, and paved, gravel or dirt roads and residences. Buffers should be 500 feet to protect soil quality and health, as well as wildlife. A 25-foot no cut buffer along perennial streams is inadequate due to the wildlife that live in or nearby the streams. Animals often travel along corridors that parallel streambeds. A 100-foot no cut buffer along wetlands is inadequate as amphibians may travel 500 feet from vernal pools. Similarly, people who live in homes off of roads near the GMNF should not have their water sources threatened, or the streams on their properties subject to erosion due to logging.

Fifth, if logging is to occur, it should be prohibited outside of the winter season, i.e., there should be no dry season harvest. This restriction is necessary to protect wildlife as well as the soil, which would be irreparably damaged by landings, skid routes, and roads. no

Finally, 96% of timber harvested in Vermont is on private land. About 2% is from state land and 2% from federal land. There is no known need to harvest timber, especially healthy timber, on public land. Older forests sequester and store greater amounts of carbon. Logging will not only reduce sequestration and storage of carbon; it will increase also carbon emissions with trucks and equipment. Thank you for your careful consideration of my comments.