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Organization: Middlebury College Sunday Night Environmental Group

Title: Board Member

Comments: As a strong advocate for our forests and planet, and as an active board member of the Middlebury College Sunday Night Environmental Group, I express deep concern over the proposed Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project. Under the conditions of our current ongoing climate crisis, it is irresponsible to allow for a logging project of this nature to pass. Forests are critical to carbon storage and sequestration; the largest 1% of trees store 30% of all aboveground forest carbon in the United States. In addition, significantly less than 1% of Vermont forests are Old Growth forest. Old Growth forests are carbon powerhouses, and are able to store much greater amounts of carbon than newer/second successional forests (despite what some people and logging industries try to claim). Therefore, despite the appearance of large masses of tree cover in Vermont, it is critical to both the health of our local ecosystems in Vermont, and our planet as a whole, to keep as many healthy forests and Old Growth forests in tact in order to try to mitigate the impacts of some of our current extreme carbon/greenhouse gas release into our atmosphere. Old Growth forests are one of our best resources we currently have left in regards to combatting climate change. Even though timber harvest is necessary for the economy, most timber harvested in-state is not even utilized in-state; it is exported. We harvest significantly more timber than we need and use in the state of Vermont, and the urgency for which protecting Old Growth forests (some which are key patches that exist within this Telephone Gap area) outweighs necessary minor shifts in the logging/timber industry. There will be no economy to gain profit for when the earth becomes unlivable. I hope you understand that forests are our lifeline, and this proposed project directly threatens the health and wellbeing of Vermonters and other Americans alike.