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Title:

Comments: I would like to add my voice to the thousands of Vermonters standing in opposition to the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project - I support the No Action alternative for Telephone Gap.

We are facing an existential threat to humanity and we as a people must re-think our old models of what got us into this mess. We ought to listen to the current clear and hard science which urges us to protect old forests and consider climate friendly alternatives to intensive cutting as is detailed in this proposal. This project, including its current revision, is based on an outdated forest plan - even if it's technically legal to do so, how can you proceed in good conscience knowing that this forest plan needs to be legitimized? Thus purely under these grounds should no action be taken, and this position should be reassessed only under the parameters at the time of an updated forest management plan. Along those lines can the US Forest Service please provide for the public a more rigorous Environmental Impact Statement to determine the significance of its proposed management actions in this wilderness area?

We are seeing the dramatic decline in biodiversity virtually everywhere. Extreme weather events have become the norm with unprecedented droughts and flooding each year in the Northeast. The EPA has reported that New England is among the fastest warming places on the planet. Forests like the Telephone Gap wilderness offer a multitude of ecological services and is our greatest hope in the fight to counter climate change. These forests and their older mature trees sequester the most carbon dioxide from the atmosphere - currently storing half of the world's above ground carbon. These trees go beyond our best technological advancements in carbon sequestration, they are free and require no maintenance. This reason alone is enough to disregard an out dated proposal which did not take climate and sustainability into consideration.

I do want to thank the Forest Service for adding Alternatives C and D which propose changes that would lower the intensity of timber harvest and would reduce the miles of roads constructed in the project area. These alternatives however are only a small step in the right direction, and they are still greatly inadequate in honoring our President's Executive Order on conserving mature and old-growth forests. We must be united in protecting all mature stands over the age of 80 in the Telephone Gap landscape and across the entire Green Mountain National Forest. By doing this we will give certain imperiled species like the endangered Northern Long-eared Bat a chance to survive in our state.

Vermont is seeing a loss in its native bat populations and this cut will prove devastating to some of our most vulnerable bat populations. Not to mention negating all the hard work that communities and conservationists have done to help these species begin to make a comeback on our lands. Needless to say this area provides crucial habitat and connectivity to a great array of wildlife and is home to threatened and endangered species. The Telephone Gap wilderness is one of the largest wildlands we have in Vermont and we are deeply blessed to have this healthy maturing ecosystem. Any birder would undoubtedly tell you of the multitudes of migratory birds which come through and briefly depend on this forest and its young and old trees, as well as its dead and dying trees. Though a cut would benefit some species that seek out early successional growth, mature stands of trees in biodiverse areas are increasingly rare and thus ever more valuable to migratory species. Environmental assessments show that logging this area will negatively impact the Otter Creek and White River and will exacerbate flooding in downstream communities and farmlands. For these reasons I am calling for an end to logging in all Inventoried Roadless Areas, including the 16,000-acre Pittenden Inventoried Roadless Area in the Telephone Gap project area.

I hope that through reading all of these comments perhaps you will reflect on the change that we as a society must make as we view our forests and our landscape in general - away from the capitalist-commodity view. We

ought to recognize just how valuable these wild places are, as they are, serving the greater good of us all and of all life. I hope we can adopt this view now when mature forests are more valuable to sustaining life on earth than they have ever been before.

I would like to see the US Forest Service working with local communities and indigenous communities that live within the greater landscape of these environments, along the watershed and bordering forests where intensive logging is in question. I would never agree to a proposal that hadn't consulted with local indigenous community leaders and valued their voices at the table. In the future I look forward to more transparency in regard to our public lands with all Vermonters in the conversation and in the know.

Please select Alternative A, No Action, which would allow the forests of the Telephone Gap landscape to grow old for the benefit of biodiversity, the resiliency of our communities, the health of our waterways, and the ecological services it provides us in the fight against climate change.