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Comments: The Green Mountain National Forest Supervisor's Office has obtained footage of an endangered Canada Lynx walking across the property. This footage was captured on the office's outdoor security camera. Although the Environmental Assessment conducted by the Forest Service asserted there is no evidence of endangered species in the area, the footage indicates that is clearly untrue. In light of this evidence, moving forward with the project would be a violation of federal law. It also raises questions about the efficacy of the assessment, and other potential areas that may have been overlooked.

Even absent the illegality of this project, the Telephone Gap project should not commence. On the global scale, forest protection represents approximately half or more of the climate change mitigation needed to hold temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The largest 1% of trees store 30% of all aboveground forest carbon in the US. Public forests in New England store, on average, 30% more carbon than private forests. We should not be spending our tax dollars to subsidize cutting old trees on public lands. Research by the University of Vermont shows that New England forests could store 2 to 4 times more carbon if we allow them to grow old. Letting mature and old trees stand is one of the most effective things that Vermonters can do to combat climate change and extinction. Private forests are the source of 96% of the timber supply in Vermont, so protecting public forests would have minimal impact on the wood products economy. Why in the world would we be targeting old-growth forests on our public lands, when there are so many other options available? Due to the targeting of old-growth forest specifically, this section of land carries unique losses-- indicating that this project planning lacks the necessary foresight. We must put our public forests on a different path.

These same forests are also powerhouses for biodiversity, clean water, and climate resilience. Many of New England's most imperiled species, including pine marten, Northern Long-eared Bats, and brook trout, thrive in healthy, old forests. Old forests excel at removing the phosphorus and nitrogen that drive algal blooms and dead zones in our rivers, lakes, and ponds. Additionally, they are exceptional at reducing the impacts of both floods and droughts, by slowing, sinking, and storing water-- which has been a recent challenge for Vermonters in light of the horrendous flood damage we've received multiple years in a row.

Specifically, Telephone Gap will:

- Release 254,556 metric tonnes of carbon from logging operations based on the Forest Service's own calculations. This equates to 59,377 gas powered vehicles driven for a year.
- Cut 817 acres rare old-growth forest.
- Log 1,800 acres of the 16,000-acre Pittenden Inventoried Roadless Area near Rochester, VT, one of the largest blocks of unprotected wild forest in the whole state of Vermont.

How in the world could this be deemed to have "No Significant Impact"? Please, do not move forward with this illegal project. Local residents have been fighting back against this project for years. Do not bring environmental destruction to a uniquely loved and beneficial ecosystem when there are thousands of private acres available to the logging industry.