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First name: Dennis

Last name: Fournier

Organization: Vermont Traditions Coalition

Title: Secretary

Comments: My objection to Alternate Plan C would be that it removes needed timber harvest from the entire project as described in Alternate Plan B. A portion of this harvest is the creation of early successional vegetation which is needed in the Southern Green Mountain Biophysical Region. Vermont's Conservation Design - Natural Community and Habitat Technical Report - March 2018 and also from Vermont Agency of Natural Resources [ VANR 2019 report ] estimated the current percentage of early successional habitat at only .2% of their target set at 3-4% in this biophysical region. This biosphere is a high-priority block. Their goal is to achieve 22,00- 30,000 acres of early successional habitat. Plan C removes approximately 1000 acres of needed habitat improvement. These numbers indicate that the creation of early successional habitat is not meeting the intended goals.

The fear that is present among some people when climate change becomes a topic of discussion can be overwhelming. Vermont forests are healthy and growing at 1.5 times the amount that is being harvested. Vermont's Government Website - Climate Change in Vermont developed a 2021 Carbon Budget. Natural and working lands in Vermont stored nearly 2,000 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>-e and sequestered carbon at an annual rate of 2.91 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>-e in 2020. Vermont stated that the state must act to ensure that we maintain and enhance this sequestration and storage capacity. This statement indicates in my opinion that the forest management plans past and present are meeting said objectives. The health of our wildlife depends on the diversity created by early successional habitat. Sustainable forest management allows the remaining timber to continue to capture and store carbon.

Old-growth forests defined by the Forest Plan and Vermont State-designated old forests are not being harvested in Alternate Plan B. In my opinion, Alternate Plan B is the best option to create the best diversity scenario within the Telephone Gap Project. I hope the Forest Service will reconsider its decision. Thanks to the Forest Service's stewardship throughout the State of Vermont.