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First name: Margaret

Last name: Gish

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service,

I am a middle school math teacher and special educator living in Vermont's Telephone Gap region. I am writing to urge you not to support the Telephone Gap logging project as it would damage species, release tons of carbon emissions and destroy some of the largest area of old growth forest left in Vermont. I am an avid distance runner and hiker. I currently take care of a portion of the Long Trail just north of Telephone Gap as a volunteer position for the Green Mountain Club. I hike or run daily and I frequent the Long Trail in the Telephone Gap area. One of my favorite hikes in the Telephone Gap region is to hike the Romance and Hogback Mt loop in August. In some parts of the year, depending on the mud, this is a very runnable section of trail. Late August is the perfect time to finish such a loop and then pick wild blueberries. These wild blueberries that are nourished by the biodiversity and habitat of the Telephone Gap region are unlike any others I have ever had. I have seen people of all ages in the blueberry patch sharing stories and connecting in community with and caring for the land.

The Telephone Gap project would demonstrate the exact opposite level of care. The Telephone Gap logging project would cut 817 stand acres of old growth, a significant figure considering that the US Forest Service estimated in June that there are only 2,000-acres of old-growth in the 400,000-acre Green Mountain National Forest. In other words, only 0.5% of the entire forest is old growth, and the Telephone Gap project threatens this extraordinarily important and rare habitat.

The Telephone Gap project would release 254,556 tons CO₂e, the equivalent of driving more than 60,000 average passenger vehicles for a year. This is the climate impact from just one of the National Forest's logging projects - the Early Successional Habitat Creation, Robinson, Somerset, and other recent projects are all on a similar scale, and conceivably are already releasing similar or greater amounts of climate pollution.

The Telephone Gap area is home to extremely rare species, including the Canada Lynx. According to public records obtained by Standing Trees, a Canada Lynx was seen on September 3rd, 2024 walking just outside, of all places, the GMNF headquarters in Mendon! If Canada Lynx are traveling past the Forest Supervisor's office alongside the busiest road in the region, it is all but certain they are using much better habitat nearby in the heart of the Telephone Gap landscape. And yet, despite proof of the presence of Lynx in the Telephone Gap project area, the Forest Service stated in the Telephone Gap Biological Evaluation that "the gray wolf and Canada lynx are not known to occur within the project area on the GMNF, [and] they are not likely to occur within the project area in the foreseeable future." This is nonsense! The Forest Service must go back and analyze potential impacts to lynx.

I have spent countless hours in the Telephone Gap region outside with students as well. I want students to continue to have the opportunity to wonder about how long slugs live for or what biomechanics of the wood frog cause it to hop so well? That sense of wonder is something that is deeply engrained in the Telephone Gap area for me and extends into the whole Green Mountain range. Let's keep it alive!