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First name: Pam

Last name: Youngquist

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear District Ranger Mattrick and Staff,

I have been one of the 13,000 petition signatory requesting cancellation of the USFS Telephone Gap project and have provided oral and written comment to USFS previously, so my thoughts on the continuation of approval of this project going forward have been made known.

However with recent information specific to the Telephone Gap plan and USFS nationally, regarding mature and old growth forests, there is yet more to consider before forging ahead with this logging project. USFS Chief Randy Moore on January 7th pulled the national plug on protecting mature and old growth forests that the Biden administration put forth in 2022, while indicating care and management of such forests will be up to each state's discretion. If the management (beyond resource extraction forestry) of our national forests mature and old growth forests has bottomed out on a federal level it is up to us in each state to take up the role of true protective stewardship of public lands in a greater manner. You have received more unique comments submitted for Telephone Gap than any other project in GMNF history. That along with the petition have shown you what a vast sector of Vermont people are demanding of you - to cancel this project and create a new (and finally updated) agency plan for recreational use with management that is focused on that which sustains trails and becomes inclusive, because we make monetary incentives available, of foresters that provide actual public education/mentoring on complex ecological systems and their absolute necessity to remain intact for life to continue. Either that or do an immediate EIS before another step is taken. Your current path is a blind folded, ear muffed, run for a environmental outcome that terrifies all of us who are paying attention to your actions, not your words.

Telephone Gap being just one of your series of significant logging projects in the GMNF, makes your intent to cut nearly 11 thousand acres of public forest, 91% of which is classified by you as mature or old growth, beyond reproachable. The Telephone Gap logging project would cut 817 stand acres of old growth, using your Region 9 definition, which is a significant figure considering that you estimated in June 2024 that there are only 2,000 acres of old growth in the 400,000-acre Green Mountain National Forest. The habitat destruction from such logging will imperil uncountable numbers of animal species, including Northern Long-Eared Bat, Brook Trout, and potentially Canada Lynx. That is why an EIS should be mandatory right now, to determine with greater specificity and depth what species exactly will be impacted by all your proposed actions. Climate alteration from massive increases of carbon release, using your own estimation of 254,556 tons (just for the TG project alone), is not a pollution increase Vermont can afford to risk. Indeed it would be moving in the exact wrong direction in our current precarious climate times.

We need to ensure lasting protection of these irreplaceable ecosystems with their biodiversity now. Greenwashing by putting forth information endorsing playing aggressive hokey pokey games with tree and animal species as solutions to the very destruction we created via our collective "good ideas" management of the planet so far is incorrigibly short sighted and an echo of our past fools errands. We all remember how our "good idea" of tree plantations worked out over time.

I am asking you, once again, please do not go forward with the precedent of destruction of our public lands this project would invoke.

Thank you for your serious consideration of these, and hundreds of other commenters, concerns.