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Comments: As a first and second grade teacher who grew up between Vermont and Virginia, I've spent my life teaching children about the importance of taking care of our planet and practicing stewardship for the land. Vermont's forests, like the Telephone Gap Forest, are some of the most precious resources we can protect for future generations. This mature forest is a living classroom-a place where children can learn about biodiversity, climate resilience, and the beauty of a healthy ecosystem. It is our duty to ensure that these lessons remain available, not just in books but in the world around them.

I want to remind the Forest Service that this is a public forest, and you are tasked with managing it on behalf of the public. The overwhelming majority of public comments during this process have opposed the proposed timber harvest. Your role is to listen to the people who rely on this forest and who care deeply about its future. The public has spoken clearly: this forest must remain standing, intact, and healthy.

We must also recognize the unique opportunity we have with forests like Telephone Gap to allow prime candidate forests to grow old again. Vermont has so few truly old-growth forests remaining, but with thoughtful stewardship, we can ensure that maturing forests like this one can develop into rich, biodiverse old-growth ecosystems in the future. These ecosystems not only support a stunning array of wildlife but are also critical in mitigating climate change and preserving our natural heritage for the next generation.

Logging the Telephone Gap Forest would not only harm wildlife, water quality, and carbon storage, but it would also break the trust that Vermonters have placed in the Forest Service to protect this shared resource. This decision must reflect the voices of the people you serve, not outdated management practices.

I urge you to reconsider this plan and prioritize the long-term health of this forest and the communities that depend on it. Protecting Telephone Gap Forest isn't just about saving trees; it's about teaching future generations the value of stewardship and leaving them a world worth inheriting.