Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/18/2025 3:35:17 AM
First name: Peter
Last name: Heartwood
Organization:
Title:
Comments:
Dear U.S. Forest Service,

The overwhelming public opposition to logging the Telephone Gap Forest has been clear and persistent-so why is the Forest Service continuing with a plan that disregards the voices of Vermonters? The people have spoken, yet it feels like you are not listening. Why are you even asking for public comments if you are not going to take them into account? This is a public forest, and your duty is to serve the public's interests, not ignore them.

The revisions you are now presenting us with are, frankly, largely unchanged from the original proposal. This is insulting to the public, who have been unequivocal in their opposition to logging this forest. It's as if the public's concerns are being ignored entirely, and you're simply going through the motions. This is not how public engagement should work. If you are going to ask for input, you must be prepared to respond meaningfully to what people are telling you.

The Telephone Gap Forest is not just any forest. It is a mature, biodiverse ecosystem that is critical for wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and maintaining the health of our watersheds. It is one of the few remaining places in Vermont where we can allow a forest to reach old-growth conditions-a resource we can't afford to lose. This forest must be preserved, not logged, if we are to have any hope of mitigating climate change and preserving biodiversity for future generations.

Moreover, the proposed timber harvest is completely out of step with the direction this country should be heading in. President Biden's executive order to protect mature and old-growth forests is a call to action, one that the Forest Service should embrace rather than oppose. By moving forward with this outdated management plan, you are actively going against the momentum for meaningful climate action and conservation.

The consequences of logging this forest go beyond the loss of trees-it will destroy the Otter Creek watershed, degrade water quality, and increase the risk of erosion and flooding. This is not just an environmental issue; it's a public health issue, one that will directly affect our communities.

It is beyond frustrating to see the Forest Service continue to disregard the voices of the public, who have been loud and clear in their opposition to this timber harvest. The time for listening to Vermonters is now. You have the opportunity to protect this irreplaceable forest, and I urge you to do so.