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First name: Lynn
Last name: Wild
Organization:
Title:
Comments: The times I have visited the Green Mountain National Forest, experienced the wind flowing through the strong branches of its trees, the fresh air and the peace of deep woodlands with busy creatures, the spongy cushion of years of mulched leaves and pine needles beneath my boots - these experiences fill my mind as I write today. Some of us find ourselves bonded with this complex and stunning gift that includes the Telephone Gap Parcel - such a rich, and full opportunity for so many of us - a forest in process, held in trust by the Forest Service, to protect it for this and future generations.

As I write, I try to figure out how to make sense of what seems a compulsion to ignore an indescribable opportunity given to us, to step back, to take time, to observe and to learn more about this unique treasure with its resources in this unpredictable time.

An amazing thing happened in September of 2024, a Canada Lynx made its way toward the Green Mountain National Forest Headquarters in Menden. It was photographed! Could this mean a unique habitat for a rare creature within the GMNF is now in development? Without our help . . .

I would ask the person making the decision about the proposed management actions to take a deep breath and do the unthinkable. Postpone the road construction, postpone the timber harvests, postpone the pesticide applications, for 5 years. Keep the the area designated in the Pittenden Inventoried Roadless Area - roadless.

So that we can find out just how much of the increased storm waters stay in the Forest rather than head down the eroded hills into the local housing areas, schools and farms: into the new resort development in Killington.

I appreciate this opportunity to again call attention to proposed actions for the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project that seem contraindicated by the devolving conditions brought about by significant flooding that has happened across Vermont in the summers of 2023 and 2024. I provided my previous comments April 8, 2024, and described the role trees, forests and healthy soils play in helping manage the extreme weather events linked to climate change and human manipulation of the earth's surface.

From the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural resource-concerns/soils/soil-health (accessed 8 April 2024) "Principles to Manage Soil for Health:
Soil health research has determined how to manage soil in a way that improves soil function.

* Maximize Presence of Living Roots
* Minimize Disturbance
* Maximize Soil Cover
* Maximize Biodiversity "

I like the description of healthy soil as described by the USDA:
"Soil is not an inert growing medium - it is a living and life-giving natural resource. It is teaming with billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation of an elegant symbiotic ecosystem."

Defined by the USDA as they apply it to agriculture, it also applies to forestry,
"Soil health is the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals,

and humans.
Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. Soil does all this by performing five essential functions:

* Regulating water
Soil helps control where rain, snow melt, and irrigation water goes. Water flows over the land or into and through the soil.
* Sustaining plant and animal life
The diversity and productivity of living things depends on soil.
* Filtering and buffering potential pollutants
The minerals and microbes in soil are responsible for filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposits.
* Cycling nutrients
Carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and many other nutrients are stored, transformed, and cycled in the soil.
* Providing physical stability and support
Soil structure provides a medium for plant roots. Soils also provide support for human structures and protection for archeological treasures.

Because as healthy soil applies to agriculture and is now becoming (again) the foundation for new best practices in farming, it also applies to forestry. I expect that following soil health principles outlined by USDA for agriculture will become part of the new best practices in forestry. Our communities will certainly benefit as will the lynx, the moose, and all the innumerable neighbors with whom we share the forests.

With respect and with great expectation,
Lynn Wild