

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/28/2026 5:00:00 AM

First name: Daphne

Last name: Hewitt

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Ms Gifford and District Ranger Mattrick:

I am writing as a stakeholder and neighbor to the proposed Northern Escarpment Ecological Restoration and Fire Resilience Project. My husband and I own, and permanently reside on, 171 acres of forest land adjacent to the Green Mountain National Forest and the proposed treatment area. You can see our property on a Leicester Town map, in the name of Hewitt.

I have read the project documents that are publicly available and submitted a short response during the public comment period. I would like to take this opportunity to express my concern in more detail, as I was unable to attend the one public meeting in January. It seems to me that the project is trying to move forward very quickly without sufficient time for active information sharing or reflection.

I am a forester; I have a Masters in forest management from UVM and have worked in sustainable forestry and forest certification for over 25 years. I am by no means opposed to treatment when the actions are well justified with scientific and practical evidence. Thank you for considering my comments below.

Extent of treatment area and expected outcome

* I do not see the justification for such a large fire treatment area in this forest ecosystem in the documentation provided. There is no evidence that fire is a significant risk in this area, nor that controlled burns will favor white oak regeneration. For example, the biggest challenge we have to quality regeneration in our forest is the dominance of beech in the under story after years of high-grading prior to our ownership. GMNF's response to the question of how beech would respond to fire was not reassuring; it is possible that fire may be favorable to beech and make the situation worse, not better.

* Why not reduce the pilot to a smaller area? It appears to an outsider that GMNF is seeking the maximum the treatment area allowed using a Categorical Exclusion, for ease and speed of implementation without justifying why 2,770 acres is appropriate.

Environmental impacts

* GMNF has not provided evidence that the impacts of herbicide use on the ecosystem have been considered. What are the risks to amphibians and other wildlife, and the potential contamination of water sources?

* For example, on our property, close to the proposed treatment area, there is a spring and pond. In the deeds of our property, our neighbors are historically allowed to run lines from the spring to serve their household needs. Some neighbors may still be using this as a water source, and could be negatively impacted.

* The richness of flora and fauna species in this unique recreational area of Moosalamoo surely requires an environmental impact assessment prior to the treatment proposed treatment in this project. Is this truly eligible for a Categorical Exclusion as per legal definition?

Time-line and consultation

* As a neighboring landowner I would expect more opportunity to hear from GMNF - will there be further in-person consultations? How will GMNF respond to the 45+ written comments that were submitted, plus the questions from the January meeting that remain unanswered? I see that many respondents share the concerns I cite above and are following the process keenly. Transparency is essential.

* As a taxpayer funding public lands, I strongly support the use of my taxpayer's dollars on GMNF conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to any treatment in the Norther Escarpment area and using the findings to adjust the project activities and time line accordingly. If, as GMNF says, fire is already long overdue in this area, surely delaying the project to complete an EIA and conduct further consultation will not impact the outcomes in any negative way, and can only improve them.

Thank you for your consideration. I have great respect for GMNF and the work you do to maintain our rich forest heritage in Vermont. I would like to see a fully transparent project with clear and accessible justifying evidence that all stakeholders can support.

Regards