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Organization: Elnu Abenaki Tribe

Title:

Comments: Please accept the following comments, both in general and with regard to the Early Successional Habitat Creation Project #53629.

I act as a liaison on public policy, planning, and permitting for the VT State-recognized Elnu Abenaki Tribe, acting under the authority of Elnu Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan, and as a proxy for Nulhegan Abenaki and Koasek Abenaki. As Native people in our homelands, part of which is currently under the jurisdiction of the USDA Forest Service, we seek to maintain our relationships with this landscape through dialogue with other parties. This is an opening, and continuation, of an evolving conversation. I attach an already extant gathering permit issued by Supervisor John Sinclair to Nulhegan Chief Don Stevens dated Feb. 5, 2016.

With regard to the development of the study under consideration, future supporting documents such as the NEPA assessment, and other projects planned elsewhere in the GMNF, we have several points of concern regarding policy development. 1. We request involvement in the planning and implementation of all cultural resource investigations related to indigenous presence. 2. We request development of a comprehensive natural resource gathering policy, similar to the one currently in place. 3. We request inclusion in project planning that may impact Traditional Cultural Properties, as outlined in Section 106, NHPA. 4. We request inclusion (through consultation) of an indigenous perspective in the development of promotional and educational materials (brochures, signage, outreach programming, etc.) for Forest Service holdings and facilities, to the practical degree possible.

Please see this as an opening exchange in the development of an ongoing conversation. We look forward to future opportunities to work with you on this and other endeavors here in Vermont.