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First name: Rob
Last name: Wipfler
Organization: Kingswood Camp for Boys
Title: Co-director
Comments: Let's work together in a spirit of partnership to envision and deliver a better future for the Lake Tarleton region. Let's think and act outside the box to ensure the expectations and intentions of the 2000 land acquisition of the Tarleton area are met. We can do this by designating a Lake Tarleton- Webster Slide Scenic Area.

I still clearly remember the elation that I felt upon the announcement in the year 2000 that the landscape around Lake Tarleton would be preserved in perpetuity. I felt so relieved that the future of the lake and its surrounding woodlands, which had been imperiled for decades, had been determined, and that the character and uniqueness of the lake had been recognized and would be protected forever. To the many of us involved, this felt like the end of a long journey- and one that had a happy ending.

In the words of Republican U.S. Senator Judd Greg at the protection celebration in 2000, "Many of us here today have worked hard for a number of years to reach the point we are at today where we can proudly say that this pristine New Hampshire wilderness has been saved." Quoting from an article in the local Journal Opinion of the time, there was an implicit promise to promote "low impact recreational activities… including a foot trail loop around the lake with spurs to Lake Constance, Mt. Piermont, and a spur connecting to the Appalachian Trail" among other improvements.

Imagine our surprise and disappointment when we learned that instead of seeing a draft EA which preserves the unspoiled wilderness feel of the lake and works to expand "low impact recreational opportunities", we saw a plan which passes over those values in favor of a commercial timber harvest.

At its root, this is an ethical and moral issue. The basis of the controversy comes down to what is felt by a large number of individuals to be a violation of trust. There seems to be a significant loss of institutional memory within the Forest Service with respect to what was promised to this community back in the late 1990's. I'm sure this is not intentional, but is the natural outcome after nearly two decades have passed and leadership has changed.

The acquisition of the lands surrounding Lake Tarleton was undertaken twenty five years ago explicitly to protect the land around Lake Tarleton from ever being under the threat of development or commercial logging ever again. This is what the public was told when donations were requested (and received), and this is what the public was told when the congressional delegation celebrated the protection of Lake Tarleton in 2000. Again, to quote senator Judd Gregg, "Preserving the last remaining acreage around Lake Tarleton brings to a close a multi-year effort to preserve what is truly one of the outstanding gems of New Hampshire's outdoors. Reaching this milestone means that future generations will enjoy this scenic area in its natural state for many years to come." Surely "future generations" means more than a mere 22 years, and the "natural state" does not include clearcuts and commercial timber harvesting.

I can speak for myself, and the Kingswood Camp community, when I say that we have waited patiently, ready and waiting for the WMNF to have the bandwidth to turn its attention to our quiet corner of the state. Our belief and expectation was that the WMNF would be excited to partner with us (for both our intimate knowledge of the area as well as our manpower resources and long-standing commitment) to help realize the tremendous recreational potential of this special place. We still are here, waiting, and hoping that potential- and the vision that all of those who toiled so hard to preserve this special spot in the first place- isn't irretrievably lost. I have spoken with a number of local trail alliances who are also interested in joining a partnership to steward the area's trails and recreational opportunities.

I have a great deal of respect for all of the members of the Forest Service who have been involved in this project- good people who care a lot about the work they do. It's not too late for them to steer this ill-conceived version of the Tarleton Integrated Project into a new (or perhaps the original circa 2000) vision for the future of the landscape. What it would take would be the courage to think and act outside the box. By designating a Lake Tarleton- Webster Slide Scenic Area, the WMNF could quickly and easily ensure that the original promise and intent of this parcel is met, and restore the faith and trust of the community.

Lake Tarleton is undeniably beautiful and scenic- on par with the other designated scenic areas in the state, all of which are in the eastern part of the state on the other side of I-93. It is "truly one of the outstanding gems of New Hampshire's outdoors", and it affords a view not unlike what one experiences when summiting one of the state's 48 4,000 footers, but having the benefit of being accessible to all, regardless of age, mobility, or fitness.

Yes, the National Forest is the "land of many uses" but we don't need to commit to all of the uses on all parts of the forest. Clearly the highest and best use of this particular landscape is one which encourages low impact recreation while protecting the unique scenic, wilderness, and environmental quality of the land for all to enjoy.

As a member of the Lake Tarleton Association, I have helped facilitate our Lake Host program for the past 20 summers. We log boat launches from the public access, perform courtesy boat inspections to prevent the spread of invasive species into the lake, and educate boaters on the threat of invasive species. Our data shows that we log over 1000 unique boater visits to Tarleton each summer (and this is only representative of weekend traffic). The vast majority of these boaters use small, personal craft such as kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards. And when we ask them why they chose to visit Lake Tarleton, the replies are almost always the same - for its tranquility and unspoiled natural beauty. If asked about this project, I am confident that they would voice a strong preference for the area to remain free of evidence of commercial logging. I presume you will hear from many of them during this comment period.

When I met with members of the Tarleton Integrated Project team at the very first introduction and scoping meeting in Warren, NH in early 2019 I spoke at length about the numerous historical trails which have been in existence in the woods around Lake Tarleton for over 100 years now. Please see the attached map of the 1921 trail system. There are trails to various beautiful and unique sites within the project area, including paths which visit Lake Constance, Freddy's Pond, the Manning Plaque (Memorial) on Aloha Hill, the Lund Cemetery, and the trail which circumnavigates a large percentage of the shoreline around the lake. There are also two trails up Mt. Piermont, the summit of which affords a stunning view of the entire area- and one which would unquestionably be marred were the current proposals to go into effect. These trails are known to the public and hundreds of people walk them each year. There are also good opportunities to connect a spur trail to the Appalachian Trail.

Whether these trails are left as is for the public to enjoy, or actively improved, signed, and promoted under an improved forest plan, what is beyond argument is that the current project plan endangers all of these trails. For example, the trails to Lake Constance and the Manning Plaque would be rendered impassable and potentially destroyed as intensive logging would take place along large swaths of them. The very popular trail which circles the lake and which includes several campsites and a rope swing would also be significantly impacted by the logging which would be taking place as close as 100 ft. from the shoreline of the lake. Since the trail is set back from the shoreline, the logging could be far less than 100 feet from the trail and campsites. These are important cultural resources as well as recreational resources which need to be protected. Historic Tarleton Club trails are culturally significant and would be damaged directly and indirectly through the proposed action. Nobody wants to hike through large swaths of clearcuts and these historical trails may be irrevocably lost or destroyed. Therefore the current plan does the opposite of what was originally intended for this area in that recreation will be curtailed.

The WMNF has an important one-time opportunity to do something uniquely positive for the citizens of this area of New Hampshire, and indeed for all people who visit and value the Lake Tarleton region. Please recognize that this is an ethical and moral issue and do the right thing: designate this the Lake Tarleton- Webster Slide Scenic

Area.

Rob Wipfler