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**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** February 13, 2020

**Somerset Integrated Resource Project - Environmental Assessment 30-day Comment Period  
Invitation for Public Comment through March 16, 2020**

I am pleased to provide an opportunity to review and comment on the Somerset Integrated Resource Project (Somerset project) Environmental Assessment. The nearly 71,000 acre Somerset project area includes National Forest, state, town, and private lands located primarily in the towns of Dover, Glastenbury, Searsburg, Somerset, Stratton, Wilmington, and Woodford, but also includes small portions of Sunderland and Wardsboro within Bennington and Windham Counties, Vermont. The project proposal includes management activities on National Forest System lands to achieve multiple resource benefits as provided by direction in the 2006 Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

The Somerset project environmental assessment is the culmination of over three years of field inventory and resource analysis conducted by Forest Service staff working closely with the public throughout the process. The project proposed action is designed to move the forest landscape toward desired resource conditions within the project area. Included in the proposal are activities to improve wildlife and fish habitat, restore soil and water conditions, increase recreation and scenery viewing opportunities, and improve trail and road networks. The proposal also includes timber harvesting to provide wood products to local and regional economies, enhance forest health and diversity, and create more diverse plant and wildlife habitat.

The *Somerset Integrated Resource Project Environmental Assessment* document dated February 2020 provides a detailed description of the proposed action and disclosure of associated environmental effects. The focus of the resource analysis is based primarily on public comments received in response to the Somerset project notice of proposed action and opportunity to comment scoping document dated March 2019. Some modifications to the proposed action were also made as a result of public comment.

The environmental assessment document, associated maps showing where proposed activities are located, and other project information can be found on our project website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53706>. The documents are also available for review at the Manchester Ranger Station located in Manchester, Vermont and the Green Mountain National Forest Supervisor's Office located in Rutland, Vermont.

As the Responsible Official for this project, I am interested in hearing from you regarding the proposed action and resource effects disclosed in the environmental assessment. Your feedback will help us identify possible additional issues or concerns we may need to address in the final environmental assessment expected for completion by May 2020.

**Comment Period**

The final environmental assessment will be the basis for my draft Decision Notice for how to implement the Somerset project and is subject to the project level pre-decisional administrative review (objection) process found at 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. In order to be eligible to submit an objection prior to a final decision and implementation, you will need to provide timely specific written comments during any period designated for public comment. The initial opportunity for public comment was during the 30-day comment period for the scoping document in April 2019.



This environmental assessment 30-day comment period is the second and last designated opportunity for public comment for the Somerset project. Individuals or entities who submit timely specific comments during this 30-day comment period ending March 16, 2020 may be eligible to submit an objection when the draft Decision Notice for this project is ready for public review.

### **How to Submit Comments**

Comments received in response to this invitation, including name and address of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public review.

In order for your comments to be considered they must be submitted to me care of (c/o) Jay Strand in one of the following ways:

1. Written comments
  - Mail: USDA Forest Service, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, Vermont, 05767
  - FAX: (802) 767-4777, ATTN: Jay Strand, Somerset Project
  - Forest Service online comment system at:  
<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=53706>
2. Hand delivered comments
  - Written comments can be hand delivered to the Manchester Ranger Station at 2538 Depot Street, Manchester, Vermont, 05255 during normal business hours, Monday to Friday, excluding holidays (8:00 am – 4:30 pm)
3. Interactive Web Map
  - Use our interactive web map to provide written comments at:  
<https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=f7d0d359c9894ec2bd242cc7d4208a62>

Please be sure to include the following information with your comments to be eligible to submit an objection:

1. Name and postal address (phone number and email address is recommended but not required)
2. Title of the proposed action (Somerset Integrated Resource Project)
3. Specific written comments regarding the proposed action (comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider)
4. Signature or other verification of identity upon request

If you have questions or would like more information about the Somerset Integrated Resource Project proposed action, environmental assessment, or how to submit comments, please contact Jay Strand, at USDA Forest Service, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, Vermont, 05767 (mail); 802-767-4777 (facsimile); [jay.strand@usda.gov](mailto:jay.strand@usda.gov) (email); or call Jay directly at 802-767-4261, ext. 5522 (phone).

Thank you for your continued interest in the Green Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

*/s/ David Francomb*  
DAVID FRANCOMB  
Manchester District Ranger