



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
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Somerset Integrated Resource Project

Public Comments Received for the Proposed Action

Content Analysis and Response to Comments

**Green Mountain National Forest
Manchester Ranger District**

**Towns of Dover, Glastenbury, Searsburg, Somerset, Stratton,
Sunderland, Wardsboro, Wilmington, and Woodford**

Bennington and Windham Counties, Vermont



Shep's Meadow - Somerset, Vermont

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Somerset Integrated Resource Project - Public Comments Received for the Proposed Action Comments Content Analysis and Response to Comments

This document provides the content analysis of public comments received in response to the *Somerset Integrated Resource Project – Notice of Proposed Action and Opportunity to Comment* document dated March 2019 during the 30-day comment period from March 30 to April 29, 2019. It also provides the Forest Service response to specific issues raised by the comments received. Many of these issues were used to determine the focus of the environmental analysis documented in the *Somerset Integrated Resource Project Environmental Assessment* (Somerset Project EA) dated February 2020.

Issues were developed by the Forest Service Somerset Integrated Resource Project (Somerset project) interdisciplinary team (IDT) from written correspondence in response to the opportunity to comment document. Comments received are located in the project planning record identified with a unique document number. In addition, each issue contained within the comment documents has an identifying number, for example, 11-3 is issue #3 in document #11.

The following are the comment document number and comment sources.

Document #	Comment Source
1	Andrew Rebak
2	Adrian Kostrubiak
3	Matthew Nicklis
4	Michael Golin
5	Kelvin Dobert
6	Chris Salvatto
7	Richard Sills
8	Paul Fisher
9	Charles Sullivan
10	Jeff Miller
11	Matthew Ogelby
12	Ryan Smith
13	Tabi Freedman
14	William Reilly
15	Shawn Schiavo
16	David Brautigam
17	Gregory Wormstedt
18	Hannah Regier
19	Noah Pollock
20	Andrew Swayze
21	Sheila Boyle
22	Eric Osterlund
23	Oliver Neith
24	Joanne Beck
25	George Fjeld
26	Rosemary Scavotto
27	Craig Heindel
28	Brant Dinkin
29	Bill Wilson
30	Richard Pendleton

Document #	Comment Source
31	Joshua Roche
32	Owen Maguire
33	Brian Englishman
34	R. J. Adler
35	Brennan Cofiell
36	Robert Fisher
37	Dorothy Wallace-Senft
38	Carolyn Milton
39	Windham County Trails Alliance – Kim Stinson
40	Vivianne Farmer
41	Aaron Rice
42	Daniel Kirk
43	Benjamin Mitchell-Lewis
44	Trout Unlimited, CT River Valley Chapter – David Deen
45	John Davie
46	Michael W. Dane
47	Kerry Wilson
48	Jeremy Huckins
49	Daniel Smith
50	David Rivers
51	Dave and Kathy Larsen
52	Chris Mays
53	Richard Hausman
54	Aiden Gilbert
55	William Chrisafulli
56	Dick Artley
57	Sean Tierney
58	Patrick Hess
59	Brian Mohr
60	Mike Donohue
61	Sheldon Wein
62	Lucas Lecuyer
63	Jed Bingham
64	R. Stoll
65	Terry Nordborg
66	Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, NE Chapter – Matthew Breton and Kyle Lapointe
67	Town of Dover – Andy McLean
68	Town of Stratton – Chris Liller
69	Frank Thompson
70	Vermont Association of Snow Travelers – Matthew Tetreault
71	Christopher Crafts
72	Dave Lacy
73	Vermont Native Fish Coalition – Timothy Hayes and Paul Bugeja
74	Malcolm Moore
75	David DePaul
76	Darlene Paola
77	Larry Lecuyer
78	Jesse Tibbits
79	Catamount Trail Association – Heidi Pancake

Document #	Comment Source
80	Kevin Lafayette
81	Dutch Hill Alliance of Skiers and Hikers – Jeff Nugent
82	Jeff Nugent
83	J. Knox Hongell
84	Timothy Marr
85	Shaftsbury Snow Pilots - Raffi Peterson
86	Kathleen Doyle
87	Hoot, Toot & Whistle/Vermont Mountain Bike Association – Mike Purcell
88	Tim Shannon
89	Trout Unlimited, Deerfield River Watershed Chapter – Bill Obear and Eric Holloran
90	Trout Unlimited, Deerfield River Watershed Chapter – Michael Vito and Eric Holloran
91	Vermont Natural Resources Council – Jamey Fidel; Audubon Vermont – David Mears
92	Brian Donovan
93	Julie Holt
94	Bears Crossing Condo Association – Robert Stone
95	Vermont Native Fish Coalition – Timothy Hayes and Paul Bugeja
96	Ian Danby
97	Mark Nelson
98	Nancy Urner-Berry
99	Ed Mariani
100	Jennifer Ogden
101	Trout Unlimited, Southwestern Vermont Chapter – Erin Lyons
102	Tony Bailey
103	Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department – John Austin
104	Marshall Brooks and Stephanie Greene
105	Ebnu Abenaki Tribe – Rich Holschuh
106	D. Renter
107	Casey Jennings
108	Steve Meranti
109	Andy McLean
110	Bob Cross
111	Lewis Grove
112	Fiona Watt and Harold Neu
113	Julie Holt
114	State Division of Historic Preservation – Laura Trieschmann
115	John Redd
116	Jim Sanders
117	Bob Brown
118	Shaftsbury Snow Pilots, VT Association of Snow Travelers - Ryan Bottesi
119	Jim and Laura Dauchy
120	Brian Carra

Definition of Issues

An issue is defined as a concern regarding anticipated resource effects from implementing the proposed action. Issues are considered important factors in the decision to be made and help focus the environmental analysis for the relevant resources of concern in the environmental assessment.

1. Issue Categories

For purposes of preparing the Somerset project environmental assessment, issues derived from public comments have been separated into three categories:

- a) **Alternative to the proposed action.** These issues indicate a need to consider an alternative to address resource concerns. Alternatives, when developed in detail, display a clear difference in environmental effects associated with the issue.
- b) **Topics of public interest.** These issues are important because they indicate a public desire for disclosure of effects relative to resource concerns.
- c) **Required by law, regulation or policy.** Disclosure of effects associated with the proposed action are often needed to determine compliance with law, regulation or policy.

2. Non-Issues

Non-issues are derived from comments that do not readily lead to an issue. In some instances, non-issues are addressed with some discussion in the environmental assessment.

Non-issues are separated into the following categories:

- a) Outside the scope of the proposed action or irrelevant to the decision to be made
- b) Suggest improvements or corrections to the proposed action
- c) Ask questions, seek clarification, request information, or request specific action
- d) Suggest opportunities for public collaboration or partnerships
- e) Express general or project specific support

Comment Content Analysis Process

During the content analysis process, comments were summarized by an issue statement and then grouped into resource areas for each respective issue category. Issue statements describe a clear cause and effect relationship between the proposed management activities and some resource consequence. An effort was made to capture as many similar issues as possible with one issue statement. Issue statements were given a public concern (PC) or sub-concern (SC) number under each resource area (in the left hand column) so that they can be more easily tracked. The identifying comment number(s) are also provided following each issue statement so their source can be readily referenced for its full text in each respective comment document.

1. ISSUES

Issue category 1a: Alternative to the proposed action

No issues were identified for this category.

Issue category 1b: Topics of public interest

Road construction associated with harvest activities.	
PC 30100-01 Water	Impacts water quality. (56-3, 91-10)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to water quality from proposed temporary road construction are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.6, pages 60 to 66.	
PC 30300-05 Soils	Creates soil issues. (111-1)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to soil from proposed temporary road construction are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.7, pages 66 to 74. Mitigation measures designed to protect the soil resource are included in Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands, pages B-5 to B-11.	
PC 31700-01 Invasive Plants	Encourages the spread of non-invasive species. (91-10)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to non-native invasive plants from proposed temporary road construction are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.3, pages 46 to 50. Mitigation measures designed to minimize the spread of non-native invasive plants are included in the Somerset Project EA at Appendix B, Non-native Invasive Plants, pages B-2 and B-3.	
PC 33000-04 Multiple	Leads to impacts to other resources such as American marten, northern long-eared bat, or sensitive wildlife and plant species. (91-10, 91-22)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to American marten are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.2, page 45. The effects relative to sensitive wildlife and plant species are included in Sections 3.4, pages 50 to 57; and Section 3.5, pages 57 to 60, respectively. Mitigation measures designed to protect American marten and threatened, endangered or sensitive wildlife species habitat and populations are included in Appendix B, Forest Habitat and Vegetation (page B-1), and Wildlife Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species (pages B-3 and B-4).	
Land clearing and creation of a permanent upland opening in the fork formed by Forest Road 71 and Somerset Road (Compartment 102/Stand 10).	
PC 30300-03 Soils	May cause erosion. (101-2)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to soil from proposed land clearing in Compartment 102/Stand 10 are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.7, page 72. Mitigation measures designed to protect the soil resource specific to land clearing and root wad removal are included in Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands (Root wad removal for large wood placement), pages B-8 and B-9.	
PC 31400-22 Fisheries	May cause temperature stabilization effects to the Deerfield River. (101-2)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to temperature change for the Deerfield River from proposed land clearing in Compartment 102/Stand 10 are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.6, page 65.	

PC 30100-02 Water	Activities may affect the water quality in streams classified as A(1) per the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Guidelines. (97-5)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to water quality in streams including those classified as A(1) surface waters from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.6, page 65.	
PC 30100-04 Water PC 30300-01 Soils	The Handle Road parking and trailhead may cause erosion and runoff affecting adjacent land at Bears Crossing. (98-2, 113-3)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to water and soil resources from proposed parking area and trailhead construction along Handle Road are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 37.	
PC 30100-05 Watershed	The recreation activities proposed in the backcountry recreation area including the bike and hiking trail may impact the Cold Brook watershed. (112-12, 112-15)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to Cold Brook watershed from proposed recreation activities in the backcountry recreation area are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 37. Mitigation measures designed to protect the soil and water resources specific to trail construction and use are included in Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands (Mountain bike trail construction and decommissioning), pages B-10 and B-11.	
PC 30300-02 Soils	Activities may affect soil productivity - implement specific residual coarse woody debris material targets following harvesting to maintain soil productivity. (91-13)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to soil productivity from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.7.4.2, pages 69 to 73. Mitigation measures designed to protect the soil resource are included in Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands, pages B-5 to B-11. Additionally, a mitigation measure specific to retaining coarse woody material is included in Appendix B, Forest Habitat and Vegetation, page B-1.	
PC 30300-06	Mountain biking in the backcountry recreation area will impact soil stability. (112-14)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to soil stability from proposed mountain bike trail construction and use are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 37. Mitigation measures designed to protect the soil and water resources specific to trail construction and use are included in Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands (Mountain bike trail construction and decommissioning), pages B-10 and B-11.	
PC 30700-02 Carbon	Timber harvests will reduce carbon sequestration. (97-3)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to carbon sequestration from proposed timber harvests are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 38. See also the response to PC 30700-01 and PC 30700-02 under issue category 2c.	
PC 31300-04 Wildlife	Backcountry ski zones may affect habitat connectivity or integrity of habitat features. (66-5)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to habitat connectivity or integrity of habitat features are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, pages 36 and 37.	
PC 31300-05	The 2.1 mile hiking trail can lead to mountain bike misuse that will accelerate degradation of habitat. (66-8)

<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to wildlife habitat from proposed hiking and bike trail construction and use are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, pages 36 and 37.	
PC 31300-06	Roads and human activity inhibit wildlife ranges to maintain viable populations. (76-02)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to wildlife habitat and viable wildlife populations from management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.2, pages 40 to 46; and Section 3.4, pages 50 to 57. The temporary use of non-system woods roads would result in short-term, negligible impacts to individuals (due to avoidance of these areas while in use) and no effect to wildlife populations as a whole. After project completion, these roads would be closed and returned to pre-use condition, thereby minimizing any long-term impact.	
PC 31300-07	Minimize and disclose impacts to American marten. (91-16)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to American marten from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4.2, page 45. It should be noted the proposed action was modified to include the mechanical piling of up to 10 to 30 percent of harvest slash with piles distributed within designated regeneration harvest treatment areas to create American marten foraging and denning habitat (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1, page 18). Mitigation measures were also designed to minimize effects to American marten from proposed harvest treatments (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B, Forest Habitat and Vegetation, page B-1).	
PC 31300-12	The proposed trail along Deerfield Ridge may impact remote wildlife habitat. (112-9)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to remote wildlife habitat from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Sections 3.1, Table 3-1, pages 36 and 37.	
PC 31600-05 Ecological	The recreational activities within the proposed backcountry recreation area will impact the montane spruce forest and montane yellow birch-red spruce forest high quality natural areas. (112-3)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to natural areas from proposed recreation activities within the backcountry recreation area are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 37.	
PC 31600-06	The proposed boardwalk will result in significant ecological damage to the extensive wetland along the Deerfield Ridge. (112-4)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to wetlands from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.7, pages 66 and 73. The boardwalk would result in a beneficial effect to the wetland resource since it would alleviate ongoing damage occurring in the wetland from the existing trail use in the area.	
PC 31600-07	The proposed trail and backcountry ski area may impact the uncommon habitat in the area. (112-7)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31600-05 above.	
PC 31600-08	The proposed trail along Deerfield Ridge may impair the fragile natural resources due to heavy volume of hiking and biking. (112-11)
<i>Response:</i> See the responses to PC 30300-06, 31300-04, 31300-05, 31300-06, and 31600-05 above.	
PC 31600-09	The increased trail traffic attracted to the proposed vista along the northern Deerfield Ridge may impact the ecological integrity and habitat in the area. (112-17)
<i>Response:</i> See the responses to PC 31300-01 and 31300-05 above.	

PC 31700-02 Invasive Plants	There will be introduction of non-native invasive plants into harvest areas. (91-20, 97-8)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to non-native invasive plants from proposed harvest treatments are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.3, pages 46 to 50. Mitigation measures designed to minimize the spread of non-native invasive plants are included in the Somerset Project EA at Appendix B, Non-native Invasive Plants, pages B-2 and B-3.	
PC 54000-01 Trails	Do not decommission snowmobile trails because:
SC 1	These type trails provide an opportunity for backcountry, no groomed and low traffic experience. (3-1)
SC 2	They are part of the best trail system in the northeast and I've been riding these trails for years. (5-1, 6-1, 14-1, 17-1, 57-1, 70-7, 75-2, 77-1, 78-1, 85-1, 120-2)
SC 3	It would negatively impact the local economy dependent on snowmobile tourism. (6-1, 9-1, 46-3, 50-1, 116-3, 120-1)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to proposed snowmobile trail decommissioning are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.2, pages 76 and 77. Additionally, the propose action was modified to add improvements to 8.5 miles of the existing Glastenbury Trail (Forest Trail 375) for snowmobile use to help offset negative effects to trail decommissioning (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, page 23).	
PC 54000-02	Minimize snowmobile trail closure from harvest activities.
SC 1	These are part of the best trail system in the northeast. (4-1, 10-1, 62-1, 70-2, 75-1, 77-2, 116-2, 117-1)
SC 2	Especially along the Airport Road and Glastenbury Loop. (10-2, 80-2)
SC 3	The Shaftsbury Snow Pilots spent considerable resources to better maintain the trail to the fire tower. (10-3)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to snowmobile trail use from proposed harvest activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.2, page 77. Mitigation measures designed to minimize effects to snowmobile use are included in Appendix B, Recreation (Trails), pages B-11 and B-12.	
PC 54000-03	Minimize snowmobile trail closure along Corridor 7 (FR 71, Airport Road) because it is the only corridor trail leading north/south out of the area, and closing it will funnel use onto narrow trails that could not sustain the traffic.
SC 1	Keep the Old Cabin snowmobile trail open to provide bypass when Corridor 7 is used by logging trucks. (36-3, 46-2)
SC 2	Plow half the road for logging traffic while the other unplowed half for snowmobile use. (70-3)
SC 3	Construct alternate trails to bypass logging trucks and equipment. (70-4)
SC 4	Keep the Deerfield River Loop Trail open to provide bypass when Corridor 7 is used by logging trucks. (70-5)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to 54000-02 above.	
PC 54000-17	Harvesting will adversely affect the remote backcountry experience of Catamount Trail users.
SC 1	In Compartment 150/Stand 9, 10, 11 and 27 south of Grout Pond. (79-9)
SC 2	In Compartment 105/Stand 1 south of Somerset Reservoir. (82-7)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to Catamount Trail user experience from proposed timber harvest activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.2, page 77. Mitigation	

measures designed to minimize visual quality effects along the Catamount Trail are included in Appendix B, Recreation (Scenery), page B-13.	
PC 65000-01 Eligible Scenic, Recreational Rivers	Ensure the Eligible Scenic and Recreational rivers are not degraded. (97-10)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to scenic and recreational river eligibility from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.2, pages 77 and 78.	
PC 70000-02 Health	Do not use herbicide containing glyphosate because research conclusively show exposure has been known to be harmful to humans. (56-8)
<i>Response:</i> The commenter appears to assume Roundup as a brand name product is synonymous with all glyphosate products given the references provided as an attachment to his comments (Glyphosate Dangers). There is concern regarding the use of additives (such as surfactants) contained in the Roundup product and not glyphosate applied by itself. The proposed use of glyphosate in the Somerset project only includes a maximum application rate of 7.56 pounds of active ingredient per acre without highly toxic surfactants such as those found in Roundup.	
The health effects relative to the proposed use of glyphosate are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 38. Mitigation measures designed to minimize health effects from glyphosate application are included in Appendix B, Glyphosate Application, page B-1.	

Issue category 1c: Law, regulation, or policy

PC 31100-01 TES Wildlife	Disclose northern long-eared bat protective measures. (91-14)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to northern long-eared bat from management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.4.4.2, pages 54 to 56. Mitigation measures designed to protect northern long-eared bat habitat and populations are included in Appendix B, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Wildlife Species, pages B-3 and B-4.	
PC 31100-02	Disclose effects from the biological evaluation including protective measures for sensitive wildlife species. (91-15)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to sensitive wildlife species from management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.4.4.2, page 56. Mitigation measures designed to protect sensitive wildlife species habitat and populations are included in Appendix B, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Wildlife Species, pages B-3 and B-4.	
PC 31100-07	Consider effects from backcountry recreation area between Haystack and Mount Snow in proximity to northern long-eared bat hibernaculum. (103-10)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-01 above.	
PC 31100-08	Consider effects from loss of potential northern long-eared bat roost trees cut for large wood placement in streams. (103-11)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-01 above.	
PC 31100-11	Proposed activities may impact Bicknell's Thrush habitat. (112-8)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-02 above.	

PC 31200-01 TES Plants	Disclose effects from the biological evaluation including protective measures for sensitive plant species. (91-15)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to sensitive plant species from management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.5.4.2, pages 58 and 59. Mitigation measures designed to protect sensitive plant species habitat and populations are included in Appendix B, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Plant Species, pages B-4 and B-5.	
PC 38000-01 Heritage	Protect Ricker Dam site from proposed timber harvesting and wood placement. (67-1, 108-1, 109-1)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to heritage resources from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.9.4.2, page 80. Mitigation measures designed to protect heritage resources are included in Appendix B, Heritage, pages B-14. This site will be surveyed by Forest archeology staff following National Historic Preservation Act requirements prior to implementation of any proposed ground disturbing activity and protected accordingly.	
PC 38000-02	Protect historic sawdust pile beyond Ricker Dam from proposed log landing. (67-6)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 38000-01 above.	
PC 38000-05	Protect or minimize impacts to old logging railroad grades in Compartment 108/Stand 104 and Compartment 1-2/Stands 17 and 18 from harvest activities because they are important evidence of past land uses. (82-4)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 38000-01 above.	
PC 38000-06	Survey and protect Tudor homestead and workers camps for the construction of Somerset Dam. (82-5)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 38000-01 above.	
PC 38000-07	Survey and protect logging era Camp 1 near Rake Branch. (82-6)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 38000-01 above.	
PC 38000-10	Consider historical sites within the proposed backcountry recreation and Handle Road areas. (112-28)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 38000-01 above.	
PC 38000-11	Consult with the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to any project implementation. (114-1)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 38000-01 above. The Forest Service will submit archaeological survey reports relative to all proposed ground disturbing management activities to the Vermont State Historic Preservation Office and consulted tribes for review. These reports will document the Forests' findings that the activities may not affect or may not adversely affect historic properties. Concurrence for these survey reports must occur prior to implementation of any project soil disturbing activity (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B, Heritage, Introduction to heritage resource mitigation measures, pages B-13 and B-14).	

2. NON-ISSUES

Issue category 2a: Outside the scope of the proposed action or irrelevant to the decision to be made

PC 14000-02 Forest Plan Consistency	The Forest Plan needs at least 9 significant amendments to comply with the National Forest Management Act. (56-1)
<i>Response:</i> The comment was not specific to what significant amendments are needed for the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to comply with the National Forest Management Act. The Forest Plan is currently in compliance with this act.	
PC 15000-02 Funding	Spend all of your NFTM funding the same fiscal year you receive it. (56-2)
<i>Response:</i> This comment is irrelevant to the decision to be made. Timing of fund allocations and expenditures has no relevance to the environmental effects disclosed in the Somerset Project EA.	
PC 41000-07 Trailheads, Signs, Parking	Increase parking capacity and improve signage to relieve parking shortage along the Upper Dam Road in Chimney Hill. (115-2)
<i>Response:</i> This comment is outside the scope of the Somerset project proposed action. The location of the existing parking area is on private land and outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service.	
PC 54000-08 Trails	Improve the Catamount Trail east of Somerset Reservoir. (36-9)
<i>Response:</i> This comment is outside the scope of the Somerset project proposed action. Most Catamount Trail segments east of the Somerset Reservoir are on private land and outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. The Catamount Trail Association is actively considering options to improve these sections of trail.	

Issue category 2b: Suggest improvements or corrections to the proposed action

PC 14000-03 Forest Plan Consistency	The proposed trails in the backcountry recreation area are not consistent with Management Area goals and objectives. (112-2, 112-6, 112-27)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed backcountry recreation areas is within the Diverse Forest Use and Alpine Ski Area Expansion management areas (Forest Plan, pages 47 and 48, and pages 103 and 104, respectively). The Somerset project is designed to be consistent with Forest Plan management direction including goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines for all management areas (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.1.3, page 2).	
PC 30200-01 Riparian	Establish and maintain riparian buffers along streams to protect streams from management activities. (73-5, 95-1, 107-4)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Plan forest-wide standards and guidelines require buffers along streams (Forest Plan, 2.3.2 Soil, Water, and Riparian Area Protection and Restoration Standard S-2, page 20).	
PC 30200-02 Riparian	Describe how heavy equipment will be employed when placing large wood to minimize impacts to riparian areas. (91-19)

<p><i>Response:</i> A description of wood placement methods is included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2, page 20. More specifically, use of heavy equipment for placing large wood would involve limited access and egress points into the stream to minimize soil and vegetation disturbance in riparian areas. Generally, but depending on stream conditions, a tracked excavator would enter the stream and travel up the channel to a point and work downstream to the access point, then travel downstream and work back upstream to the access point. In steeper areas or when more boulders are in the stream channel, a “spider” excavator may be used which moves on “legs” rather than tracks.</p> <p>Mitigation measures designed to minimize riparian area effects from placement of large wood with an excavator are included in Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands (Aquatic restoration), page B-9.</p>	
PC 30300-07	The clearing of hobblebrush in the backcountry ski zones will result in erosion of the ridgeline. (112-23)
<p><i>Response:</i> Not all hobblebrush would be cut and large and midstory trees (with more significant root structure) would be retained. The vegetation that would be cut would result in minimal change to the overall root structure on the ridge. Hobblebrush does very little to prevent erosion which is mainly prevented by an intact litter/organic layer on the ground surface. No ground disturbing activity is anticipated and no soil would be exposed. For these reasons, soil erosion from establishing backcountry ski zones would be negligible.</p>	
PC 31300-02 Wildlife	Do not harvest specific black cherry stands because they provide important bear habitat. (63-1)
<p><i>Response:</i> Cherry is fairly common in the Somerset project area and many stands are outside of stands proposed for timber harvest. Most of the cherry are approaching the end of their lifespan and exhibit decline and mortality. Cherry is an early successional species and requires sunlight to survive past seedling stage and grow into the forest canopy. Regeneration treatments are needed to maintain it on the forest landscape. Although the Forest Plan provides for retention of mast trees (Forest Plan, Section 2.3.7 Wildlife, Mast Guideline G-1, page 29), a mitigation measure has been designed to retain marginally merchantable cherry with good crowns in harvest treatment areas when silviculturally feasible (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B, Forest Habitat and Vegetation, page B-1).</p>	
PC 31300-10 Wildlife	The harvest of mature beech together with the loss of red oak from oak wilt will devastate wildlife dependent on hard mast. (107-1)
<p><i>Response:</i> Several Forest Plan forest-wide standards and guidelines require the retention of mast trees including bear-claw beech (Forest Plan, Section 2.3.7 Wildlife, Wildlife Reserve Trees – General, page 27; and Mast Trees, page 29), which are incorporated into silvicultural prescriptions. Also, it is standard practice in all silvicultural prescriptions to leave healthy beech trees when found.</p> <p>Oak wilt is unlikely to have a large effect on the project area. Oak wilt is most destructive when there are large acreages of red oak species in a forest, as it spreads readily through root grafts. Northern red oak exists as scattered individuals in certain areas of the project area, and are less likely to be affected by root graft spread. However, the project does propose to increase the stocking of oak in the project area. Oak wilt does not result in the death of all oak trees. For example, oak wilt has been established on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Wisconsin for a number of years. There are still large numbers of red oak species on that forest, as seasonal restrictions and silvicultural techniques have been used to minimize its effect on the oak population.</p>	
PC 31300-11 Wildlife	Re-introduce beaver into some of the areas where they do not occur to diversify the ecosystem. (110-3)

<i>Response:</i> This action was considered in the project area, but determined to be unnecessary given the existing amount of wetlands (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 3, Section 3.7.3, page 68).	
PC 31400-03 Fisheries	Place large wood in Black Brook and East Branch. (44-3, 101-3)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action was modified to include the placement of large wood in Black Brook and East Branch (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2, page 12).	
PC 31400-04	Replace culvert along Box Cover Brook to allow aquatic organism passage. (44-4)
<i>Response:</i> This is not on National Forest System lands so not under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. Trout Unlimited is encouraged to work with Great River Hydro to pursue this suggestion.	
PC 31400-05	Work with Great River Hydro to place large wood in Box Cover Brook. (44-5)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31400-04 above.	
PC 31400-06	Work with Great River Hydro to place large wood in the East Branch of the Deerfield River below Somerset Dam. (44-6, 61-2, 101-3)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31400-04 above.	
PC 31400-07	Place large wood in the East Branch tributaries. (44-7)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31400-04 above.	
PC 31400-09 Fisheries	Reconsider placement of large wood in Redfield Brook because warm water may preclude cold water conducive to good Salmonidae habitat. (44-9)
<i>Response:</i> Streams with suitable temperature regimes are the priority for large wood restoration. Although Redfield Brook is a lower priority because it may not have suitable temperature for trout, other watershed functions can still be achieved with large wood restoration such as flood storage, sediment retention, and channel stability.	
PC 31400-10	Work with Great River Hydro to place large wood below Searsburg dam. (44-10, 61-3, 90-4, 101-3)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31400-04 above.	
PC 31400-11	Work with Great River Hydro to place large wood in Heather Brook and Vose Brook below National Forest System land. (44-12, 90-6)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31400-04 above.	
PC 31400-13	The focus of large wood placement should be colder streams or streams that have cool tributaries and a history greater than 500 wild trout per mile. (61-1)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service agrees with this statement.	
PC 31400-16	Place wild native brook trout interpretive signs at select trailheads and adjacent to roads. (73-4)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service will work with the commenter outside of the Somerset project propose action to place interpretative signs.	
PC 31400-17	Prioritize Glastenbury River, Deer Cabin Brook, Deer Lick Brook, and Blind Brook for woody placement. (73-6)
<i>Response:</i> These streams are already included in the proposed action for large wood placement (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2, Table 2-2, page 19).	

PC 31400-18	The main stem of the Deerfield River should be the last priority for woody placement. (73-7)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service agrees with this statement. The list of streams proposed for large wood placement are not listed in priority order. Actual priority for implementation would be decided based on site-specific conditions and available funding.	
PC 32000-03 Timber Resources	Retain from harvest beech greater than 8 inches diameter breast height and free of beech bark disease. (69-1)
<i>Response:</i> It is standard practice in all silvicultural prescriptions to retain healthy beech trees when found.	
PC 32000-04	Patch cut size should be a minimum of 10 acres to provide habitat for large animal long term browse and neotropical birds. (69-2)
<i>Response:</i> Patch cuts target areas with aspen, which is in relatively small clumps in this project area. Larger temporary openings are being proposed in shelterwood harvests, most of which would be larger than 10 acres.	
PC 32000-05	Conduct more summer logging
SC 1	To provide scarification that achieves silvicultural goals. (69-3)
SC 2	To provide more opportunities for timber contractors. (71-2)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest soil scientist determines which stands can be summer harvested based on site specific soil conditions (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B, Soil and Wetlands (Harvest activities), page B-7).	
PC 32000-07	Leave some red pine within upland openings to reflect early twentieth century reforestation efforts. (82-1)
<p><i>Response:</i> Limited amounts of red pine would be considered for retention in permanent upland openings. Under certain conditions red pine in upland openings can provide wildlife value. Although considered a native species in very specific and infrequent habitats, all red pine in the Somerset project area are a result of early to mid-20th century plantations. Red pine, along with balsam fir and red spruce, offer a soft resinous bark which is often used by black bears to claw, bite and rub the bole of the tree. Used as a scent post, the sticky pitch fixes a bear's scent in its home range and conveys the timing and frequency of bears recent visits, as well as their physical stature and reproductive status.</p> <p>Historic apple orchards have often been inter-planted with red pine. Although releasing apple trees from competing vegetation is an important activity on the Forest, retaining a scattering of mixed species overstory trees such as red pine can offer the apple trees protection from wind, ice, and snow. The light overstory shading can also provide protection from the sun for apple trees growing in the understory. Sudden exposure to full sunlight can often have a deleterious effect on apple trees.</p>	
PC 32000-08	Retain old spruce in Compartment 105/Stand 1 on the ridge west of the narrow wetland complex because they are unique features in the area. (82-8)
<i>Response:</i> Although these spruce are not considered a unique feature requiring protection, they would not be harvested if they are within a wetland buffer. If outside of the wetland buffer, Forest Plan visual guidelines applied along the Catamount Trail in this location would likely preclude them from harvest.	
PC 32000-10	Plant harvested areas where regeneration stocking does not meet Forest Service manual direction including species such as butternut or disease resistant American elm. (107-03)

<i>Response:</i> Planting is an option for stands that do not adequately regenerate, and this has been proposed for the project (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1, page 17). Planting of the species such as butternut or disease resistant American elm would be desirable on appropriate sites, but disease resistant strains of these species are currently not available in sufficient numbers for large-scale planting efforts. Disease resistant strains would also need to be from a Vermont or New Hampshire seed source (Forest Plan, 2.3.4 Timber or Vegetation Management (Tree Improvement) Standard S-1, page 25), which is unlikely to be the case with these strains.	
PC 38000-03 Heritage	Restore and maintain the Somerset Schoolhouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action was modified to include the restoration of the Somerset Schoolhouse (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2, page 12; and Section 2.2.7, page 29).	
PC 40000-04 Roads	There should be more temporary roads needed to access stands given timber skidding is limited to one-half mile. (82-2)
<i>Response:</i> The amount of temporary roads proposed is based on a maximum 2,500 foot skidding distance.	
PC 41000-02 Trailheads, Signs, Parking	Winter plow Grout Pond parking lots for winter use opportunities. (79-6)
<i>Response:</i> It is uncertain whether the Town of Stratton will continue to plow Grout Pond Road. Once the decision has been made, there could be adjustments to winter parking for recreation access if determined necessary.	
PC 41000-03	Develop a new parking area along Grout Pond Road where it meets the Catamount Trail if the road is winter plowed in perpetuity. (79-7)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 41000-02 above.	
PC 41000-04	Establish winter kiosk and post signs to inhibit “postholing” cross-country ski trails. (79-8)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service recreation staff are currently working on an updated sign plan for Grout Pond. Notice to not “posthole” ski trails can be considered as part of the winter panel display for recreation information at the proposed new Grout Pond campground kiosk.	
PC 41000-05	Clarify fee signs at Grout Pond only apply to overnight use. (82-11)
<i>Response:</i> Current concerns regarding fee confusion at Grout Pond have not been noted. If more comments of concern are received, the Forest Service will consider adding signage to further clarify the fees currently only apply to overnight use.	
PC 41000-06	Clearly sign the Grout Pond picnic and group camping areas along Pond Trail. (82-12)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service recreation staff are currently working to update the sign plan for Grout Pond. This suggestion will be considered.	
PC 52000-04 Developed Recreation	Do not improve Grout Pond because it should remain rustic and not become an RV park. (57-2)

<i>Response:</i> Proposed improvements at Grout Pond are needed to address ongoing resource degradation and enhance the recreation experience for the public using this site (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.2.5, page 8). Efforts have been made with improvement designs to maintain the rustic quality of the site (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, Table 2-6, pages 24 and 25). Electric hook-up at campsites and other more highly developed amenities are not proposed.	
PC 52000-05	Consider hut location along the Catamount Trail for future date. (67-2)
<i>Response:</i> The Velomont /Catamount summer uses project is still in early planning stages. It is difficult to tell where or if the Velomont Trail would be located if it's not following the existing Catamount Trail. Early discussions about a hut in this vicinity have considered Great River Hydro land along the Catamount Trail, but they currently do not allow overnight use. It is too early in the Vermont Huts/Velomont planning stage to be able to identify a proposed hut site.	
PC 52000-06	Ensure Grout Pond improvements afford live-in host capability to enforce campground rules. (67-4)
<i>Response:</i> A substantial number of the proposed Grout Pond improvements are intended to attract a volunteer host such as additional water source, designated host site/reconstructed cabin, waste water vault, and solar hook-up. Campground hosts are volunteers and recruited annually. Without many amenities, it has been challenging to reliably recruit a host at Grout Pond.	
PC 52000-08	Consider uncomfortable sleeping and tent staking difficulty if Grout Pond campsites are hardened. (82-13)
<i>Response:</i> Material for hardening campsites (crushed gravel with high percentage of fines) are specified to a standard suitable for pitching tents. Other National Forest and state campgrounds have had success with hardened campsites. Comfort and difficulty staking tents are typically not issues if designed and constructed properly.	
PC 53000-01 Dispersed Recreation	Focused use of backcountry ski zones may cause users who value solitude to travel farther away. (66-3, 76-1)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed backcountry recreation area is appropriate for the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum for the area (Rural and Semi-Primitive Motorized). Other backcountry areas without glades would remain available for recreation across the project area. It is unlikely the current or immediate future interest in backcountry skiing will be so great so as to push users into more remote areas. Some backcountry skiers seek out managed glades. Glades would entail thinning the understory but keep larger trees (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, Table 2-6, pages 25 and 26). Such treatments would have minimal effects on the backcountry character.	
PC 53000-02 Dispersed Recreation	Crew transport associated with wood placement in Deer Lick Brook, Blind Brook and the Glastenbury River may open up trails and roads for vehicle access to backcountry areas. (67-7)
<i>Response:</i> Administrative vehicle (truck) or foot access to the headwaters during proposed aquatic restoration activities would be on existing system or non-system roads. If access by all-terrain vehicles using non-system roads (old woods roads, skid roads or trails) is deemed critical for efficiency and or safety (carrying heavy equipment), entry points would be covered with brush and/or blocked following their use to prevent unauthorized vehicle access.	
PC 54000-04	Reroute, widen and provide vistas along the Ridge Trail. (36-5)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action includes a boardwalk/bog bridging over the swamp and two new vistas (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, page 23; and Section 2.2.5, Table 2-7, page 26). The	

Forest would enter into a partnership with a local group to maintain the Deerfield Ridge Trail (north) and the proposed trails off Handle Road.	
PC 54000-05	No need to decommission the section of Deerfield Ridge Trail from Forbush Road to Haystack because it can easily be reclaimed and upgraded. (36-6)
<i>Response:</i> This section of trail has little use and is in need of substantial maintenance. The more popular Binney Brook Trail is in better condition and it would be redundant to have two connecting trails in this area.	
PC 54000-07	Provide hiking trail connection from Haystack to Chimney Hill and then west to Searsburg. (36-8)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action includes new trails off Handle Road (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, Table 2-4, page 22). Additional trails in this area may not be sustainable, and thus will not be considered at this time.	
PC 54000-09	Add mountain bike use to snowmobile trails west of Corridor 7. (36-11)
<i>Response:</i> Mountain biking is already an allowed use on designated snowmobile trails.	
PC 54000-10	Improve the old road up Rake Branch from Somerset Road for skiing and hiking access. (36-12)
<i>Response:</i> Consideration for this suggestion would entail ground inventory and review by other resource specialists. The Forest Service currently does not have partner organization commitment for trail construction and maintenance in this location. It may be considered in the future if a formal proposal is received.	
PC 54000-12	Improve the old road to establish handicap accessible trail along northeast terminus of Somerset Reservoir along the East Deerfield River from Stratton-Arlington Road. (65-1)
<i>Response:</i> The area described appears to be located on Great River Hydro land so is not under Forest Service jurisdiction to add to the proposed action. It can be difficult to improve trails to meet accessibility standards due to existing topography and wet soil conditions. Proposed activities at Grout Pond campground include improving sections of trail and access routes to meet Forest Service accessibility guidelines (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, Table 2-6, pages 24 and 25).	
PC 54000-16	Reroute a section of the Catamount Trail if the Grout Pond Road is winter plowed in perpetuity.
SC 1	To eliminate the road walk along Grout Pond Road and Stratton-Arlington Road. (74-2 79-1, 79-4)
SC 2	To allow for more parking than at the southern end of Grout Pond Road. (79-2)
SC 3	To increase opportunities for bigger cross-country ski loops from the Appalachian Trail/Long Trail parking lot. (79-3, 81-7)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 41000-02 above.	
PC 54000-18	Replace snowmobile use with cross-country ski use on the East Deerfield Loop Trail, Forest Road 383 to provide alternate route to Grout Pond and the Catamount Trail. (79-10, 81-2, 81-4, 81-6)
<i>Response:</i> The East Deerfield Loop Trail is wet, narrow, and bumpy, which are conditions that contributed to the proposed trail decommissioning in this location. Changing the managed use rather than decommissioning the trail may result in unauthorized snowmobile use. The trail would still be too close to surface water and within a wetland, and thus difficult to maintain in a sustainable manner.	

PC 54000-19	Construct/designate a new cross-country ski trail off the end of Forrester Road to access National Forest System and Great River Hydro lands. (79-13, 81-12)
<i>Response:</i> Consideration for this suggestion would entail ground inventory and review by other resource specialists. It would also require coordination with Great River Hydro. The Forest Service currently does not have a partner organization commitment for trail construction and maintenance in this location. It may be considered in the future if a formal proposal is received.	
PC 54000-20	Construct/designate a new cross-country ski trail near Vose Brook. (79-14, 81-8)
<i>Response:</i> A similar proposal that included mountain bike use was considered in 2018. The trail layout needed more development at that time and would have included complex water crossings. A similar proposal including or substituting cross-country ski use would need to ground inventory and review by other resource specialists. If there is partnership support and capacity for funding and construction, the proposal could be considered in the future.	
PC 54000-22	Expansion of the permanent opening along Grout Pond Road increasing wind and blowing snow will affect Catamount Trail cross-country ski experience. (81-5)
<i>Response:</i> There is a possibility for drifting snow, as there is with the current opening. Navigating snow drifts is part of the overall skiing experience outside of managed Nordic ski areas. If conditions prove to have unacceptable adverse effects to the ski experience, alternative access to Grout Pond ski trails could be considered.	
PC 54000-24	Do not impede non-motorized use of trails, non-system roads and OML 1 roads after closure by minimizing large berms, waterbars and drainage structure removal. (81-10)
<i>Response:</i> Temporary roads are required to be closed following their use for proposed harvest treatments including removal of drainage structures, installation of water bars and blocking access to unauthorized vehicle use (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.6, pages 27 and 28). The return of temporary roads to pre-use conditions is intended to protect soil and water resources which is the first priority. System OML 1 roads may also be closed in similar fashion although would be retained on the transportation system for intermittent use. With this said, closure activities would not preclude these roads from foot traffic.	
PC 54000-26	Improve or reroute the Grout Pond East Loop Trail especially if used for hauling or skidding timber because it is very wet and unpleasant for skiing or hiking. (82-3)
<i>Response:</i> Some improvement work or small amounts of reroute may be needed for the Grout Pond East Loop Trail if it is use for proposed timber harvest access. Any damage resulting from timber harvest activity would be repaired per standard timber sale contract specifications.	
PC 54000-27	Improve Binney Brook Trail especially if used for hauling or skidding timber because it is eroded and difficult to hike. (82-9, 112-10)
<i>Response:</i> A Green Mountain Club trails crew completed drainage work on the Binney Brook Trail in the summer 2019. The Forest Service plans to engage with Wilmington and Dover trails groups to maintain this trail in the future. If the trail is used for proposed timber harvest access, any damage resulting from harvest activity would be repaired per standard timber sale contract specifications.	
PC 54000-28	Improve and better sign the Deerfield Ridge Trail because it is muddy and eroded. (82-10)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action includes adding bog bridging or boardwalk to the swamp area on the Deerfield Ridge Trail (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, page 23). The Forest Service plans to engage with local recreation groups to assist with trail maintenance in the future.	

PC 54000-29	Construct a short spur trail from Pond Trail to view Grout Pond to avoid disrupting privacy at campsites 1 and 2. (82-14)
<i>Response:</i> This opportunity already exists with the water access point near the Day Use area. This access point would remain in the proposed improvements in addition to the new kayak/canoe accessible launch (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, Table 2-6, page 25).	
PC 54000-30	Improve and maintain closed Forest Road 275 (Little Pond Access Road) as a hiking trail to access Little Pond. (84-1)
<i>Response:</i> Minor improvement and maintenance of Forest Road 275 for hiking can be authorized outside of the scope of the Somerset Project EA.	
PC 54000-33	Create an entry/exit point for the Catamount Trail day use via Somerset Road originating from Mount Snow west to Somerset Reservoir. (106-1)
<i>Response:</i> Consideration for this suggestion would entail ground inventory and review by other resource specialists. It would also require coordination with Great River Hydro since it the trail would cross their land. The Forest Service currently does not have a partner organization commitment for trail construction and maintenance in this location. It may be considered in the future if a formal proposal is received.	
PC 54000-36	Improve the Haystack Mountain Trail because it is severely eroded and barely passable. (112-18, 115-1)
<i>Response:</i> A Green Mountain Club trail crew worked on sections of the Haystack Mountain Trail to improve hiking conditions in the summer 2019. The Forest Service plans to engage more local volunteer groups to assist with trail maintenance in the future.	
PC 54000-39	Open up more of the area to mountain bike and snowmobile use. (117-2)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service policy is to increase the effective use of partnerships in the improvement, maintenance, and operation of the Forest trails system (Forest Plan, Section 2.2.2, Goal 12 objective, page 12). Adding more designated trails for a sustainable trail system requires partnership commitment to assist with funding, construction and maintenance before they are proposed. The proposed action includes the addition of mountain bike trails off Handle Road in Dover (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4, Table 2-4, page 22). The project area would still contain approximately 66 miles of trail managed for snowmobiling after implementation of proposed trail activities (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 3, Section 3.8.4.2, page 76).	
PC 54000-42 Trails	Do not decommission snowmobile trails because:
SC 1	It counteracts extensive work we have been doing to promote snowmobiling in the Deerfield Valley and West Dover area. (8-1, 118-1)
SC 2	The East Deerfield Loop Trail and Sports Cabin Trail provide nice loops for cross-country skiing and hiking. (36-10)
SC 3	It would make it impossible to access or get off the north end of the Somerset Reservoir. (46-1, 62-2)
SC 4	The Deerfield River Loop Trail provides a long-term alternate route to Corridor 7 to disperse traffic and users providing a better riding experience. (70-6, 85-1)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 54000-01 in issue category 1b.	
PC 56000-01 Illegal Off Road Vehicles	Road building will encourage illegal off road vehicle use. (91-10, 111-2)

<i>Response:</i> Proposed temporary roads would be closed to unauthorized vehicles following their use for timber harvest treatment access. Standard closure activities include removal of drainage structures, construction of water bars, and blocking entry points (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.6, page 27).	
PC 57000-01 Illegal Activities	Backcountry ski zones may illicit glade clearing outside of designated areas. (66-6)
<i>Response:</i> Part of the intent to establish formal designation of backcountry ski zones is to reduce illegal cutting of backcountry trails in other Forest areas. The placement of a trailhead kiosk with information regarding not cutting trees without authorization, and working with a local partner organizations would educate the public to monitor and report illegal activities in and around the ski zone area.	
PC 71000-01 Noise	Harvest treatment in Compartment 100/Stand 20 will increase noise heard from Mount Snow Ski Resort. (104-1)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action was modified to drop Compartment 100/Stand 20 from timber harvest treatments (Somerset Project Area, Chapter 2, Section 2.2, page 12). The stand would need to be harvested in the summer to avoid conflicts with Mount Snow Resort ski operations. Since ground conditions would prohibit non-winter harvest activities, the stand was dropped from proposed harvest treatments.	
PC 75000-01 Safety	Inexperienced skiers from Mount Snow may flock to the backcountry ski zones and expose them to significant risk with no means for rescue. (112-24)
<i>Response:</i> Skier safety associated with backcountry recreation area use is addressed in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 39.	

Issue category 2c: Ask questions, seek clarification, request information, or request specific action

PC 10000-01 Decision Making	It appears the Forest Service has already determined an EIS will not be necessary; it is premature to assume an EIS will not be warranted until the environmental assessment is complete. (90-4)
<i>Response:</i> The purpose of preparing an environmental assessment is to determine if there are significant impacts associated with the proposed action (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.9, Council on Environmental Quality NEPA Implementing Regulations). If the responsible official determines there are significant impacts for any resource based on the environmental assessment and review of the context and intensity factors for significance, then the Forest Service must prepare an environmental impact statement. If the responsible official determines there are no significant impacts, then a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) can be prepared and an environmental impact statement is not needed (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.1.6, page 3).	
PC 11000-01 Public Involvement	Consider expanding public involvement by providing an opportunity to comment on the environmental assessment prior to completion because the current process:
SC 1	Does not provide sufficient information to understand what resources could be at risk. (72-3, 76-4, 103-1, 103-2, 112-01)
SC 2	Does not provide a chance to make comments precipitating meaningful change at the end of the process. (72-3)

SC 3	Undercuts the public dialog and trust that has been established over time and has afforded the presentation of good ideas. (72-3)
SC 4	Does not provide enough time to consider the proposed action. (76-4)
SC 5	Sets the stage for less support for management actions. (86-1)
SC 6	Does not allow the public to comment on disclosure of effects, including effects raised by the public as a concern during scoping. (72-3, 91-2, 97-1)
SC 7	Does not allow the public to comment on development of different alternatives and associated impacts. (91-2)
SC 8	Does not allow the public to comment on the decision whether a finding of no significant impact or an environmental impact statement is warranted based on the effects in the environmental assessment. (91-2)
SC 9	Does not allow the public to comment on any suggested mitigation measures to ensure natural resource protection. (91-2, 103-1)
SC 10	Does not allow the public to comment on any monitoring requirements determined should be applied during or after project implementation. (91-2)
SC 11	The current process does not allow the public to comment on any changes to the project based on public comments during scoping, the environmental assessment, and the alternatives analysis. (91-2)
SC 12	Is counter to the spirit of NEPA which requires agencies to involve the public to the fullest extent possible. (56-4, 91-3, 97-1)
<i>Response:</i> An additional opportunity for public comment has been provided with a 30-day comment period for the Somerset Project EA from February 14 to March 16, 2020.	
PC 11000-02	This project would benefit from a public hearing on the environmental impacts from the expansion of uses included in the proposed action. (76-3)
<i>Response:</i> The mode and scope of public involvement is under the authority of the Forest Service responsible official for the Somerset project. There has been robust public involvement for this project from the development of the proposed action to the formal comment opportunities afforded the public (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.3, pages 9 and 10). A public hearing was not deemed necessary to gain additional public input for the Somerset project.	
PC 11000-03	Where did you hear the public is only allowed 30-days to submit scoping comments? (56-5)
<i>Response:</i> For an environmental assessment, at least one opportunity for public comment is required for a 30-day period (36 Code of Federal Regulations 218.5 and 218.25; Forest Service Project-Level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process).	
PC 11000-04	Alert commenter when the DEIS or pre-decisional EA is posted online and accepting comments. (56-9)
<i>Response:</i> A public mailing by hard copy and email notification of the availability of the Somerset Project EA will be made available to interested or affected public contacts including those who commented during the initial 30-day comment period during April 2019.	
PC 11000-05	Why was there no involvement of abutters and why were they not invited to the public meetings? (116-1, 117-4)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service apologizes not every landowner adjacent to proposed management activities was made aware of the public meetings related to the Somerset project. An effort was made to include as many private landowners as possible for notifications of the May 2018 public meeting at Stratton Mountain Resort, and the April 2019 public meeting in Manchester Center, Vermont. Postal addresses were obtained for landowners within and adjacent to the project areas from local town	

offices. The notice was also posted on our project website and advertised in the local media prior to each meeting.	
PC 11000-06	Request to receive future Schedule of Proposed Action notifications. (119-3)
<i>Response:</i> The commenter has been added to the Green Mountain National Forest quarterly Schedule of Propose Action mailing list.	
PC 12000-01 Effects Analysis	The scoping notice makes no reference to cumulative effects; disclose cumulative effects from road building and creation of early successional habitat. (91-5)
<i>Response:</i> The March 2019 Somerset project scoping document was not meant to be an environmental effects disclosure document. The cumulative effects associated with proposed activities including temporary road construction and creation of early successional habitat are included in the Somerset Project EA. See also the response to PC 33000-03 below.	
PC 13000-01 Monitoring	Describe the methodology and monitoring protocols to adequately manage illegal off road vehicle activity, spread of invasive species and effective decommissioning of roads. (91-12)
<i>Response:</i> The Somerset project proposed activities would be routinely monitored during and after implementation by resource specialists as part of the Green Mountain National Forest monitoring program (Forest Plan, Chapter 4). Forest Service monitoring requirements ensure project activities are implemented as designed and are in full compliance with Forest Plan direction including forest-wide and management area standards and guidelines. The monitoring program also provides the mechanism to measure implementation effectiveness of project specific mitigation measures and whether changes are needed to ensure the quality of resources are not compromised beyond estimated environmental effects. Deviance from intended resource effects are noted and remedied accordingly.	
PC 13000-02	Include non-native invasive plant effects from activities and post implementation monitoring. (91-21, 97-08)
<i>Response:</i> The effects relative to non-native invasive plants from proposed management activities are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.3, pages 46 to 50. Mitigation measures designed to minimize the spread of non-native invasive plants are included in Appendix B, Non-native Invasive Plants, pages B-2 and B-3. Many of the mitigation measures require post treatment monitoring. See also the response to PC 13000-01 above.	
PC 14000-01 Forest Plan Consistency	The amount of road construction proposed is not consistent with the Forest Plan EIS. (91-6, 97-11)
<i>Response:</i> The Somerset project includes the construction and use of 31.4 miles of temporary roads to access timber harvest treatment areas (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.6, Table 2-8, page 28). A temporary road is defined as a road needed only for short-term use, such as by timber purchasers for access to a single timber sale (Forest Plan, Chapter 6, page 153). No new permanent system roads are proposed.	
The Forest Plan allows for timber harvest on suitable forest lands to achieve desired forest habitat objectives (Forest Plan, Chapter 2, page 11). Appendix D of the Forest Plan provides the estimated proposed and probable management practices expected during the first two decades of Forest Plan implementation (2006 to 2026). Although up to five miles of permanent system local roads are indicated for the first decade, there are no temporary roads listed as an activity.	

<p>During the development of the Forest Plan, it was assumed suitable lands would be accessible for harvest to achieve desired management objectives. In the absence of existing permanent system roads, the construction of temporary roads is the primary means to access suitable lands. The Forest Plan Appendix D and Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) state that site specific analysis should be conducted to determine transportation needs and objectives (Forest Plan, Appendix D, page D-1; and FEIS, page 3-346). The Somerset Project EA fulfills this purpose.</p>	
PC 15000-01 Staffing	How many staff are being hired to adequately monitor the proposed timber harvests in this and all other planned timber harvests across the National Forest to ensure they adhere to the standards required to protect water and wildlife? (97-13)
<p><i>Response:</i> Existing Forest Service staff is adequate to fulfill monitoring program requirements. See also the response to PC 13000-01 above.</p>	
PC 15000-03 Funding	Has the Forest Service accounted for bridge setback requirements for the Cold Brook trail crossing in its planning and budgeting? (112-16)
<p><i>Response:</i> Bridge setback requirements along with cost estimate calculations would be made when the exact location of the crossing is determined.</p>	
PC 21100-01 Range of Alternatives	Consideration of the proposed action and no action is an inadequate range of alternatives for this project. (56-6, 91-23, 97-12)
<p><i>Response:</i> Forest Service NEPA implementing regulations state that no specific number of alternatives is required or prescribed. Additional action alternatives to the proposed action should only be considered when there are unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (36 Code of Federal Regulations 220.7(b)(2)(i)). The content analysis of scoping comments received for the Somerset project scoping notice did not identify any unresolved conflicts specific to the proposed action (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.4, pages 10 and 11; and Chapter 2, Introduction, page 12).</p>	
PC 21300-01 Alternative	Consider a range of alternatives for lower degrees of road development. (91-11)
<p><i>Response:</i> There are 31.4 miles of temporary roads proposed for construction and use in the Somerset project proposed action. Several issues of resource concern such as water and soil resource effects from proposed road construction were considered when discussing possible action alternatives to include for analysis in the Somerset Project EA. Although the issues were identified, the comments of origin did not provide specific reasons or locations where the concerns could be directed other than within the general project area. As a result of this lack of specificity, the responsible official determined any development of an alternative with a reduced amount of temporary roads would be too arbitrary. With no description of the specific location of concern or no identification of which roads have the most potential for resource effects, it would not be possible to meaningfully develop an alternative to address the issues.</p>	
PC 21300-02	Consider a range of alternatives to minimize impacts to American marten populations. (91-17)
<p><i>Response:</i> An alternative to address potential impacts to American marten habitat and populations was not necessary for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American marten habitat was considered as part of the decision process for the amount, type of harvest method, and location of proposed harvest treatment areas during project development. A detailed spatial effects analysis for the proposed timber harvests on marten home ranges concluded 94 percent of the project area would remain suitable for this species (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4.2, page 45). 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal also includes the mechanical piling of up to 10 to 30 percent of harvest slash with piles distributed within designated regeneration harvest treatment areas to create American marten foraging and denning habitat (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1, page 18). Lastly, mitigation measures were designed to further minimize effects to American marten from proposed harvest treatments (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B, Forest Habitat and Vegetation, page B-1).
PC 21300-03	Include a range of alternatives for various levels of temporary road construction and silvicultural treatment approaches/strategies to reduce or avoid impacts to marten, northern long-eared bat, or sensitive wildlife and plant species. (91-22)
<i>Response:</i> See the responses to PC 21300-01 and PC 21300-02 above.	
PC 30100-03 Water	Regarding A(1) Vermont State classified streams.
SC 1	Has research been conducted to identify streams that are classified as A(1) or are eligible for classification as A(1) per the VT Department of Environmental Guidelines? (97-6)
SC 2	What research has been done to identify if any of the proposed timber harvest areas are within the watershed of streams classified as A(1) or are eligible for reclassification as A(1)? (97-6)
SC 3	What controls and monitoring will be done to protect the watersheds for said streams? (97-6)
SC 4	What monitoring will be done to measure the impact of timber harvests on said streams? (97-6)
<p><i>Response:</i> Class A(1) surface waters in the project area include: all streams above 2,500 feet in elevation, all streams in the Glastenbury Wilderness Area, Deerfield River Headwaters and tributaries upstream of Rake Branch, Cold Brook from its headwaters to its confluence with Mountain Brook, and Haystack Pond (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 3, Section 3.6.3, page 62).</p> <p>Class A(1) surface waters are managed to maintain waters in a natural condition, compatible with many uses, including aquatic biota, wildlife, aquatic habitat, and fishing. The Forest Service and Vermont Agency of Natural Resources - Department of Conservation (VANR-DEC) partner annually to monitor water quality on National Forest System lands downstream of a variety of land uses, and consistently find National Forest land management is consistent with meeting water quality criteria for Class A(1) ecological waters (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 3, Section 3.6.4.2, page 65).</p> <p>Proposed timber harvest treatment areas are within the Upper Deerfield River watershed classified as A(1) surface water.</p> <p>The VANR-DEC staff conducts periodic assessments for Water Quality Classification. The Forest Service and VANR-DEC staff will continue to work together to collect baseline data throughout the Green Mountain National Forest for evaluating classification and monitoring impacts from management activities including timber harvest.</p>	
PC 30700-01 Carbon	Include cumulative effects from timber harvesting on carbon sequestration abilities of the Green Mountain National Forest. (97-02)
PC 30700-03	Regarding carbon sequestration.
SC 1	How much carbon sequestration will be reduced by this project and the associated timber harvests? (97-4)

SC 2	How will this loss of carbon sequestration be off set and what is the timeframe for returning the forested areas to their current carbon sequestration abilities? (97-4)
<p><i>Response:</i> The effects to carbon sequestration from harvesting trees are summarized in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 38. A detailed site specific carbon effects analysis for the Somerset project and a quantitative assessment of forest carbon stocks and the factors influencing carbon trends (management activities, disturbances, and environmental factors) for the Green Mountain National Forest are available in the project record.</p> <p>The effects on carbon from proposed tree harvesting within the Somerset project area are generally negligible for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The emissions are extremely small relative to the total amount of carbon stored on the forest and the annual greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. and globally. • Carbon removed from the forest is not directly emitted to the atmosphere, rather it can be stored in durable wood products for many decades which also have substitution benefits. • Any carbon losses from the ecosystem would be counterbalanced overtime as the forest recovers, thus timber removals can actually result in increased carbon storage when considering harvested wood products and regrowth. • All harvesting activities on the Green Mountain National Forest from 1990 to 2011 resulted in the loss of only 0.4 percent of non-soil carbon. 	
PC 31100-03 TES Wildlife	Follow Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Forest Management Guidance for State Lands: Northern Long-eared Bats especially when a documented hibernation site or summer location occurs. (103-5, 103-7)
<p><i>Response:</i> Northern long-eared bat protective measures used as the basis for disclosure of effects are partly derived from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources management guidelines (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 3, Section 3.4.4.2, page 55; and Appendix B, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Wildlife Species, page B-3).</p>	
PC 31100-04	Include northern long-eared bat protective measures discussed at the March 6, 2019 meeting with VT Fish and Wildlife Department and Forest Service staff in the environmental assessment. (103-6)
<p><i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-03 above.</p>	
PC 31100-05	Disagree with the July 31 northern long-eared bat cutoff date for project activities and want to see an early August to mid-August date instead. (103-8)
<p><i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-03 above.</p>	
PC 31100-06	Follow state land guidance regarding thresholds for percentage of northern long-eared bat suitable habitat lost from forest management activities. (103-9)
<p><i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-03 above.</p>	
PC 31300-08 Wildlife	Follow recommendations from the February 4, 2019 Somerset/Early Successional Habitat Project Marten Analysis report, Guidelines for Managing American Marten Habitat in New York and Northern New England, and Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Comments on the GMNF Early Successional Proposal and Somerset IRP. (103-14)
<p><i>Response:</i> The recommendations from the February 4, 2019 Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Forest Service meeting were the basis for project development and effects disclosure associated with American marten. See also the response to PC 21300-02 above.</p>	

PC 31300-09	Include American marten habitat protective measures to maintain and enhance course woody material throughout the project area. (103-15)
Response: See the response to PC 31100-03 above.	
PC 31400-01 Fisheries	Collect critical fishery-relevant pre- and post- treatment data in all focus areas listed in comment letter to assess the benefit of habitat enhancements in all treatment reaches. (44-1, 90-8)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service intends to work closely with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources – Fish and Wildlife Department staff to evaluate a sampling of stream reaches where large wood restoration s proposed.	
PC 31400-02	Make every effort to develop a collaborative plan with Great River Hydro to benefit the improvement of fisheries and other relevant purposes across landowner boundaries. (44-2, 73-3, 90-3)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service and Trout Unlimited staff plan to engage with Great River Hydro to address habitat restoration opportunities across all landowner boundaries.	
PC 31400-12	Work with Great River Hydro and VT Fish and Wildlife to monitor impacts from Searsburg dam management. (44-13, 90-7)
<i>Response:</i> Although outside the scope of this project, the Forest Service routinely collaborates with other land managers to monitor water quality for streams that cross multiple ownerships.	
PC 31400-19	Conduct pre- and post-wood placement treatment evaluation of fish population densities to improve future work. (73-8)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service intends to work closely with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources – Fish and Wildlife Department staff to evaluate some of the stream reaches where large wood restoration is proposed.	
PC 31400-20	Encourage collaboration with VT Fish and Wildlife to apply large wood placement screening tool. (73-9)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service is aware of the screening tool used by Vermont Agency of Natural Resources – Fish and Wildlife Department staff primarily to determine if large wood will benefit trout populations. Placement of large wood in streams on National Forest System lands is guided by Forest Plan objectives and serves many ecological functions and processes in addition to trout (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.2.3, page 7; and Chapter 3, Section 3.6.3, page 62).	
PC 31600-01 Ecological	How will the land impacted by the timber harvests be placed back into their natural condition to support the health of native plants and wildlife? (97-7)
<i>Response:</i> The proposed action is designed to meet Forest Plan goals and objectives to maintain and restore quality, amount, and distribution of habitats to produce viable and sustainable populations of native and desirable non-native plants (Somerset Project EA, Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1, page 3). Mitigation measures have been developed to minimize negative impacts to native plants and wildlife (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B). For example, mitigation measures include restoration of roadbeds and non-native invasive plant species prevention. It is anticipated that native plants and animals would quickly recolonize harvested areas. In some cases, tree seedlings would be planted to emphasize certain tree species that are hard to regenerate from seed (such as oak).	
PC 31600-02	Include a comprehensive review of all known locations where State rare, threatened or endangered species occur, and where other critical wildlife habitats or significant natural communities exist within the project area. (103-2)

<i>Response:</i> The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources – Fish and Wildlife Department was consulted on species locations and habitat management concerns during the development of the proposed action. Documentation of species known to occur in the project area are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.4.3, Tables 3-7 and 3-8, pages 51 to 53; and the Somerset Integrated Resource Project wildlife biological evaluation available in the project planning record.	
PC 31600-04	Provide VT Fish and Wildlife Department staff the opportunity to continue collaborating with Forest Service staff to address any concerns from the review of known occurrence of State rare, threatened or endangered species, and other critical wildlife habitats or significant natural communities within the project area. (103-4)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service staff plan to continue a collaborative relationship with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department throughout the Somerset project planning and implementation process, as well as on future projects across the forest.	
PC 32000-02 Timber Resources	Don't destroy too much when harvesting timber. (64-1)
<i>Response:</i> Resource effects from proposed harvest activities are disclosed throughout the Somerset Project EA in Chapter 3. Mitigation measures have been designed to minimize resource effects to acceptable levels (Somerset Project EA, Appendix B).	
PC 32000-06	Offer small timber sales to allow small businesses to provide firewood to the surrounding communities. (71-1)
<i>Response:</i> Size and focus for individual timber sales would be decided during sale planning prior to layout. An effort will be made to provide a variety of timber sale sizes with multiple products including those designed for small business owners.	
PC 32000-09	Protect ash regeneration during site preparation to buy time for this species while potential emerald ash borer control strategies become effective and avoid elimination of ash from the landscape. (107-2)
<i>Response:</i> Ash advance regeneration is not common in the stands proposed for treatments, as it doesn't readily regenerate under dense shade. However, it is expected that regeneration treatments such as shelterwood and group selection would result in ash regeneration after harvest on sites suitable for this species. Since this regeneration would not occur until after harvest and site preparation, protection would not be a concern during these operations.	
PC 33000-03 Multiple Resources	Disclose cumulative effects to multiple resources with a focus on road development. (91-7)
<i>Response:</i> Cumulative effects for multiple resources associated with permanent system road reconstruction and temporary road construction and use are included in the Somerset EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.3.5, page 50 (non-native invasive plants); Section 3.5.5, page 59 (sensitive plants); Section 3.6.5, pages 66 and 67 (aquatic resources); Section 3.7.5, pages 73 and 74 (soil and wetlands); Section 3.8.4, page 78 (recreation); and Section 3.9.5, page 80 (heritage sites).	
PC 38000-08 Heritage	Include the Elnu Abenaki Tribe in any required or planned archaeological or cultural/heritage resource planning or surveying. (105-1)
<i>Response:</i> The Elnu Abenaki Tribe will be contacted for any heritage related planning or surveying associated with the Somerset project.	
PC 38000-09	Meet to show the location of the Ricker Dam remnants. (108-2)

<i>Response:</i> Forest archeologist staff will contact the commenter when they are ready to survey the Ricker Dam remnants.	
PC 40000-02 Roads	Monitor non-system roads/trails for unauthorized use following closure. (66-2)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service staff monitors the general forest area on a routine basis. Formal monitoring is also conducted during and after project implementation. See also the response to PC 13000-01 above.	
PC 40000-03	Town of Stratton requests to enter into a Road Usage Agreement regarding logging operations or other such movement of equipment and materials across Town roads. (68-1)
<i>Response:</i> Forest engineering staff will contact the Town of Stratton when they are ready to plan for timber sale preparation and implementation.	
PC 40000-05	Confirm that the gate location to close FR275 is in a natural pinch point at the top of the Forest Service maintained clearing as you enter a grove of mature red pines. (84-3)
<i>Response:</i> Yes, it is in a natural pinch point as described.	
PC 40000-06	Concerned about widening of Castle Brook Road through private property and would like to meet with Forest Service staff prior to implementation. (108-3)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service engineering and timber staff will contact and coordinate road activities with the landowner prior to timber sale preparation.	
PC 40000-07	Will Forest Road 325B decommission affect access to my private property? (110-1)
<i>Response:</i> No. Forest Service engineering staff will contact and coordinate road decommissioning activities with the landowner prior to implementation.	
PC 40000-08	Concerns and clarifications needed associated with logging truck traffic and road use. (117-3)
<i>Response:</i> Trucks hauling timber would use the existing network of Forest Service, state and town roads in conjunction with 31.4 miles of temporary roads proposed for construction. There would also be approximately 17.7 miles of existing Forest Service permanent system roads proposed for some amount of reconstruction and maintenance. Specific amounts of truck traffic on specific roads cannot be determined at this time. Planning for road needs is completed on a sale by sale basis with timber sales are prepared for implementation.	
PC 40000-09	Ensure Old Forester Road accessing Compartment 176/Stand 4 is not blocked following timber harvest activities. (119-2)
<i>Response:</i> The portion of Old Forester Road under town jurisdiction will not be blocked following timber harvest activities.	
PC 51000-01 Recreational Access	Ask Great River Hydro to inform all involved that kayakers can use the boat launch ramp for access to the Somerset Reservoir. (51-1)
<i>Response:</i> The commenter was provided contact information for Great River Hydro to ask them directly.	

PC 51000-02	Is it necessary to build new trails and the backcountry ski zones in sensitive alpine forest when there is already cleared ski trail access to the Deerfield Ridge via Mount Snow Ski Resort with parking? (112-29)
<i>Response:</i> There are currently no managed backcountry ski areas on National Forest System land within the project area. The proposed activities are intended to meet the demand for this type of recreation experience. Parking at Mount Snow is intended for downhill skiers and boarders at Mount Snow Ski Resort, and would not be useful for backcountry skiers skinning up from the Handle Road access.	
PC 52000-09 Developed Recreation	We question the concept, wisdom and practicality the designation and maintenance of backcountry ski zones. (112-21)
<i>Response:</i> The concept of the backcountry ski area is similar to Brandon Gap on the Rochester Ranger District, Green Mountain National Forest or other successful backcountry ski areas in Vermont. Partner organizations like Rochester/Randolph Area Sports Trail Alliance (RASTA) and Dutch Hill Alliance of Hikers and Skiers (DHASH) have a proven track record of constructing and continuing to maintain backcountry ski areas on National Forest System lands.	
PC 52000-10	We question the ability to maintain the backcountry ski zones especially with the rapid regrowth of hobblebrush. (112-22)
<i>Response:</i> The backcountry area would require maintenance which is why it would only be undertaken with the support of an established partner providing volunteer labor for the establishment and maintenance of the ski zones. This model has worked at Brandon Gap on the Rochester Ranger District and Dutch Hill south of the Somerset project area, two other backcountry ski areas on the Green Mountain National Forest.	
PC 52000-11	Who is demanding backcountry ski use and what is the documentation of this demand? (112-26)
<i>Response:</i> The demand for additional backcountry ski area opportunities on the Green Mountain National Forest is evident with the high number of users at Brandon Gap and Dutch Hill as well as the unfortunate user-creation of glades on the Rochester District. Furthermore, the concept of the backcountry area off Deerfield Ridge was proposed by backcountry skiers in the Dover area with support from the Catamount Trail Association and Dutch Hill Alliance of Hikers and Skiers. National Forest System land around Mount Snow Resort is not gladed and does not have managed skiable lines that many backcountry skiers are seeking.	
PC 54000-32 Trails	Concern the trail and parking area near Handle Road will not be adequately maintained (93-2, 98-2, 113-1)
<i>Response:</i> The construction and maintenance of the parking area and trailhead near Handle Road would be the responsibility of the Town of Dover.	
PC 54000-34	Is construction of the proposed boardwalk along the Deerfield Ridge possible given this rare and high quality area? (112-5)
<i>Response:</i> Yes, a boardwalk or bog bridging / no-deck puncheon would be viable options in this location as confirmed by a Forest Service engineer. The tread treatment with a boardwalk or puncheon is considered more desirable than relocating the trail and impacting more area.	
PC 54000-35	How and where will the proposed bike and hiking trail cross Cold Brook? (112-13)
<i>Response:</i> A bridge would be used to cross Cold Brook near the intersection with the backcountry ski collector trail and mountain bike trail intersection. It is possible that a ford could be used if the crossing	

was located on just the hiking trail (not mountain bike trail). The precise location would be determined prior to implementation.	
PC 54000-37	What is the carrying capacity of the northern section of the Ridge Trail and what is the estimated use? (112-19)
<i>Response:</i> The southern part of the Deerfield Ridge Trail is estimated to still have the majority of use on the trail after implementation of proposed trail activity due to the Haystack vista and easier terrain. The Forest Service currently does not have a dependable means for measuring trail carrying capacity.	
PC 54000-38	Questions pertaining to trail maintenance because the development of new trails without clear and detailed maintenance agreements and protocols is disturbing. (112-20)
	What and where exactly will the proposed trails be in the topography of the parcels?
	What are the current National Forest System standards for maintenance?
	Will the trails cross Cold Brook?
	How will the trails be maintained?
	Who will maintain the trails?
	Will there be a written agreement with the maintenance entity?
	Is there a budget for trail maintenance?
	What level of use will the trails see?
	Will the mountain bike trail be part of the Mount Snow bike trail system?
<i>Response:</i> The following answers the commenters in the order listed above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Map 3 - Recreation, Transportation, Soil & Watershed Activities for the location of proposed trails. The map includes topography lines. • The current trail construction and maintenance standards can be found at: https://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/trail-management/documents/trailfundamentals/03-TrailDesignParaHandout_Sec508_01-24-17_150dpi.pdf • Yes, see the response to PC 54000-35 above. • Trails are typically maintained with hand tools, but occasionally small excavators are used to smooth trail tread and clean water bars and ditches. • The Forest Service does not propose the construction of new trails without a formal partnership with an organization committed to constructing, maintaining, and contributing to the funding of the new trails. The Forest Service has a formalized agreement process (volunteer agreements and challenge cost-share agreements) with partner organizations. • The Forest Service recreation program receives funds for trail maintenance, but funding also is received from partner organizations through grant applications. • It is not known how much use the proposed trails would receive once constructed, but it is assumed the trails would have moderate use. • No, the proposed mountain bike trail would not be part of the Mount Snow bike trail system. 	
PC 60000-01 Boundaries	Who will oversee the property line along my property during logging? (110-2)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service timber sale administrator will monitor all timber sale activity and ensure the property line is protected during timber harvest activities.	
PC 60000-02	Inform landowner when private boundary along Compartment 176/Stand 4 is surveyed and ensure it is protected during harvest activities. (119-1)

<i>Response:</i> Forest Service timber staff will contact the private landowner when the property line is ready to be surveyed. The standard Forest Service timber sale contract specifications include provisions to protect private land boundaries.	
PC 62000-01 Inventoried Roadless Areas	Disclose effects to inventoried roadless areas. (92-8, 97-9)
<i>Response:</i> Effects associated with inventoried roadless areas is included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 40.	
PC 63000-01 Wilderness	Disclose effects to wilderness characteristics. (93-9, 97-9)
<i>Response:</i> Effects associated with wilderness characteristics of the Glastenbury Wilderness is included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 39.	
PC 70000-01 Health	Base the herbicide toxicity and safety disclosures on best science supported by a variety of scientific research conclusions, not just SERA. (56-7)
<i>Response:</i> The Syracuse Environmental Research Associates (SERA) risk assessment for glyphosate is dominated by three considerations: the extensive literature available on glyphosate, the availability of numerous glyphosate formulations, and the use of surfactants either as components in glyphosate formulations or as adjuvants added to glyphosate formulations prior to application. This risk assessment was contracted by the Forest Service to help the agency understand and make use of the best available science associated with the application of glyphosate products.	
The herbicide risk assessment for glyphosate completed by SERA is based on peer reviewed science and is the basis for the human health and safety effects disclosed in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 38.	
PC 74000-01 Privacy	Keep Bear Crossing landowners informed because of concern related to reduced privacy from Handle Road trailhead and parking. (93-1, 94-1, 96-1, 98-1, 99-1, 113-2)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service will notify Bear Crossing landowners of Somerset project planning and implementation activities as they occur.	
PC 75000-02 Safety	Questions pertaining to backcountry skier safety. (112-25)
	What plans for rescue are in place?
	Have local volunteer rescue services made an assessment of whether they can support backcountry ski use?
<i>Response:</i> Effects associated with public safety within the proposed backcountry recreation area are included in the Somerset Project EA at Chapter 3, Section 3.1, Table 3-1, page 39.	
PC 75000-03 Safety	Keep Bear Crossing landowner informed because of concern related to reduced security from Handle Road parking. (113-1)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 74000-01 above.	

Issue category 2d: Suggest opportunities for public collaboration or partnerships

PC 31100-09 TES Wildlife	Work with VT Fish and Wildlife Department staff to avoid impacts to northern long-eared bats during backcountry recreation area and wood placement activities.
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	(103-12)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service staff plan to continue a collaborative relationship with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department throughout the Somerset project planning and implementation process, as well as on future projects across the forest.	
PC 31100-10	VT Fish and Wildlife Department offer to provide northern long-eared bat potential roost tree identification training. (103-13)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service staff would welcome the opportunity to participate in this type of training in order to continue our collaborative relationship with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.	
PC 31300-03 Wildlife	Work with commenter to locate black cherry stands. (63-2)
<i>Response:</i> Forest Service staff met with the commenter at the Somerset project area to assess black cherry stands. Mitigation measures to protect select cherry were developed based on this field review. See the response to PC 31300-02 under issue category 2b.	
PC 31400-15 Fisheries	Work with Vermont Native Fish Coalition to establish wild native brook trout interpretive signs. (73-2)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service welcomes the opportunity for developing and placing interpretive signs. This should be done in coordination with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources – Fish and Wildlife Department staff to ensure the message is consistent with current fishery management objectives.	
PC 31400-21	Available to assist with fisheries improvement activities. (89-2, 90-1)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service will contact and coordinate with Trout Unlimited and other organizations to assist in project implementation.	
PC 31600-03 Ecological	Notify and work with the VT Fish and Wildlife Department staff to address important wildlife habitat and natural community features during project implementation. (103-03)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 31100-09 above.	
PC 32000-01 Timber Resources	Contact landowner to coordinate private land harvest activities with proposed harvest on National Forest System lands. (36-2)
<i>Response:</i> All opportunities to work with private land owners to harvest their timber in conjunction with proposed harvest activities on National Forest System lands is welcome.	
PC 38000-04	Work with volunteers to restore and maintain the Somerset Schoolhouse. (72-2)
<i>Response:</i> Forest archeology staff will contact tentative volunteer groups when they are ready to plan and implement Somerset Schoolhouse restoration activities.	
PC 54000-06 Trails	The Wilmington Trail Committee can assist in reclaiming and upgrading section of Deerfield Ridge Trail between Forbush Road and Haystack. (36-7)
<i>Response:</i> This section of trail is redundant with the more popular connection to the Deerfield Ridge from Chimney Hill (Binney Brook Trail), and also has extensive maintenance needs. The Forest Service recreation staff would welcome the Wilmington Trail Committee's assistance with maintaining the rest of the Deerfield Ridge Trail and Binney Brook Trail.	
PC 54000-11	Available to assist and discuss trail system improvement recommendations. (36-13)
<i>Response:</i> The commenter should contact Forest Service recreation staff at the Manchester Ranger District office for available volunteer trail work.	

PC 54000-13	Available to assist with handicap accessible trail along northeast section of Somerset Reservoir. (65-2)
<i>Response:</i> This section of trail is mostly on Great River Hydro land, but assistance would be welcome for work associated with the trail around Grout Pond campground proposed for accessibility improvement.	
PC 54000-15 Trails	Work with Vermont Association of Snow Travelers to minimize trail closure from logging activities and limit trail decommissioning as much as possible. (70-8)
<i>Response:</i> The Forest Service plans to work with Vermont Association of Snow Travelers staff when minimizing effects to snowmobile trail use per mitigation measures include in the Somerset Project EA at Appendix B, Recreation (Trails) Mitigation Measure 3-j, page B-12.	
PC 54000-21	Available to maintain cross-country ski trail on Forest Road 383. (81-3)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 54000-18 under issue category 2b.	
PC 54000-23	Available to maintain new cross-country ski trail near Vose Brook. (81-9)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 54000-20 under issue category 2b.	
PC 54000-25	Available to maintain new cross-country ski trail at the end of Forrester Road. (81-11)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 54000-19 under issue category 2b.	
PC 54000-31	Available to maintain hiking trail along FR 275 after closure and cutover trail from Little Pond to the Appalachian Trail/Long Trail. (84-2)
<i>Response:</i> Assistance would be welcome.	
PC 54000-40	Work with local snowmobile clubs to keep trails open during harvest operations. (118-2)
<i>Response:</i> See the response to PC 54000-15 above.	

Issue category 2e: Express general or project specific support

All comments in this category are noted.

PC 31300-01 Wildlife	Support harvesting to manage habitat. (12-1, 36-1, 63-3)
PC 31400-08 Fisheries	Support large wood placement in mainstem Deerfield River above Rake Branch, Deer Cabin Brook, Deer Lick Brook, Blind Brook, Vose Brook, Heather Brook and Glastenbury River. (44-8, 44-11, 90-5)
PC 31400-14	General support for large wood placement and fish passage improvements. (73-1, 89-1, 91-18, 101-1)
PC 33000-02 Multiple Resources	General support for multiple resource activities. (91-1)
PC 40000-01 Roads	Support decommissioning and blocking roads. (66-1)
PC 41000-01 Parking	Support improved parking and traffic loop pattern at Grout Pond. (79-1)

PC 50000-01 Multiple Recreation	Support for multiple recreation activities. (2-1, 38-1, 100-1)
PC 52000-01 Developed Recreation	Support the backcountry recreation area including ski zones and multi-use trails. (1-1, 2-2, 3-1, 7-1, 11-3, 13-1, 14-3, 16-3, 19-3, 21-3, 22-3, 23-3, 24-1, 25-3, 26-3, 27-3, 28-3, 29-3, 30-3, 31-3, 32-3, 33-1, 35-3, 36-4, 37-3, 39-3, 40-2, 41-3, 42-3, 43-3, 45-1, 47-3, 48-3, 49-3, 52-1, 54-3, 55-3, 58-3, 59-3, 60-3, 67-1, 74-1, 79-15, 81-1, 83-1, 87-1, 88-2)
PC 52000-02	Support four season hut near Grout Pond. (11-1, 14-1, 16-1, 18-1, 19-1, 20-1, 21-1, 22-1, 23-1, 25-1, 26-1, 27-1, 28-1, 29-1, 30-1, 31-1, 32-1, 34-1, 35-1, 37-1, 39-1, 40-1, 41-1, 42-1, 43-1, 47-1, 48-1, 49-1, 54-1, 55-1, 58-1, 59-1, 60-1, 53-1, 79-11)
PC 52000-03	Support Grout Pond improvements (11-2, 14-2, 16-2, 19-2, 21-2, 22-2, 23-2, 25-2, 26-2, 27-2, 28-2, 29-2, 30-2, 31-2, 32-2, 34-2, 35-2, 37-2, 39-2, 41-2, 42-2, 43-2, 47-2, 48-2, 49-2, 54-2, 55-2, 58-2, 59-2, 60-2, 67-3, 79-12)
PC 54000-14 Trails	General support of proposed terra-trails given sizeable offset of decommissioned and blocked roads/trails, and their location away from backcountry areas. (66-7, 92-1, 102-1)
PC 54000-41	Support for addition to the Catamount trail. (11-4, 14-4, 16-4, 21-4, 22-4, 23-4, 25-4, 26-4, 27-4, 28-4, 29-4, 30-4, 31-4, 32-4, 34-4, 35-4, 37-4, 39-4, 41-4, 42-4, 43-4, 47-4, 48-4, 49-4, 54-4, 55-4, 58-4, 59-4, 60-4)
PC 54100-01	Support parking and trailhead off of Handle Road. (66-4)