
File Code: 1950
Date: March 29, 2019

Somerset Integrated Resource Project – Proposed Action
Invitation for Public Comment through April 29, 2019
Learn about the Proposal at a Public Open House on April 11, 2019

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

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

The *Somerset Integrated Resource Project Notice of Proposed Action and Opportunity to Comment* scoping document dated March 2019 provides a detailed description of the proposed action. The scoping document, associated maps showing where proposed activities are located, and other project information can be found on our project website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53706>.

The documents are also available for review at the Manchester Ranger Station located in Manchester, Vermont and the Green Mountain National Forest Supervisor's Office located in Rutland, Vermont.

The Somerset project is subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations requiring the preparation of an environmental assessment to disclose the resource effects from the proposed action. As the Responsible Official for this project, I am interested in hearing from you regarding any aspect of the proposal during the 30-day comment period. Your feedback will help us identify issues related to the proposal, determine whether any alternatives need to be considered, focus our effects analysis on resources of concern, and document the results in the environmental assessment as the basis for me to decide how to implement the project.

Open House

A public open house to learn more about the Somerset project proposal is scheduled for the evening of April 11, 2019 from 4:30 to 7:00 pm at the Manchester Community Library located at 138 Cemetery Avenue/Route 7A, Manchester Center, Vermont, 05255. After a brief introduction, the open house format will provide an informal opportunity to ask Forest Service staff questions regarding proposed activities



and receive an introductory overview of the Somerset project interactive web map that provides an online opportunity to submit comments. Hard copy maps and information will also be available for review.

Comment Period

The Somerset project is subject to the project level pre-decisional administrative review (objection) process found at 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. This regulation states that in order to be eligible to submit an objection for the project prior to a final decision and implementation, you will need to provide timely specific written comments during any period designated for public comment. This 30-day comment period is the only designated opportunity for public comment that fulfills this purpose.

Comments will be accepted for a 30-day period ending April 29, 2019 initiated by the March 29, 2019 publication of the Somerset Integrated Resource Project legal notice in the *Rutland Herald*, our newspaper of record. Regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period. Individuals or entities who submit timely specific comments during this 30-day comment period may be eligible to submit an objection when the draft Decision Notice for this project is ready for public review.

How to Submit Comments

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

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

1. Written comments
 - Mail: USDA Forest Service, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, Vermont, 05767
 - FAX: (802) 767-4777, ATTN: Jay Strand, Somerset Project
 - Forest Service online comment system at:
<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?project=53706>
2. Hand delivered comments
 - Written comments can be hand delivered to the Manchester Ranger Station at 2538 Depot Street, Manchester, Vermont, 05255 during normal business hours, Monday to Friday, excluding holidays (8:00 am – 4:30 pm)
3. Interactive Web Map
 - Use our interactive web map to provide written comments at:
<https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=1da0fc0ee59143d9b394e7e6e685af45>

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

/s/ Stacy Stratton for

DAVID FRANCOMB
District Ranger