



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Green Mountain & Finger Lakes
National Forests
Manchester Ranger District

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File Code: 1950-1
Date: August 27, 2003

Dear Friends:

Last June I sent to you a copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Mount Tabor Seasonal Employee Housing Facilities project located at the Mount Tabor Work Center administrative site on the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) within the Town of Mount Tabor, Rutland County, VT. At that time, I invited you to submit comments for me to consider before making a decision regarding the proposed action. I have completed my careful review and consideration of the comments I received from the response to my invitation, the environmental analysis documented in the EA, and the supporting project planning record. In light of this review, I have decided to select Alternative 5 for implementation.

Alternative 5 includes the construction of housing facilities at the Mount Tabor work center site with a capacity for up to 20 individuals, related site work (access roads, parking and landscaping), and establishment or upgrade of utilities (water, sewer, electric, and telephone/data). It also includes the construction of a tent pad/Adirondack shelter area to accommodate up to 15 more people during periods of high demand. The housing facilities will be designed to blend in with the existing historical structures at the site and will have year-round capability with peak use anticipated during the non-winter months of April to October.

I have also decided that parking for snowmobile activities at the Mount Tabor Work Center administrative site will continue as it currently exists, but will be phased out as soon as the new housing facilities are operational during the winter months and/or snowmobile parking becomes incompatible with the administrative functions of the facilities. Replacement of the snowmobile parking to serve the trail corridor through the Mount Tabor Work Center area and greater Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) trail system will be analyzed as a separate action at a future date. I am committed to initiating the collaborative process to address the existing and future snowmobile parking and trail needs as quickly as possible following this decision.

My decision is based on my determination that Alternative 5 provides the best combination of activities that can be implemented to meet GMNF Forest Plan goals and objectives, direction found in our Facilities Master Plan, and the purpose and need for this project while minimizing potential adverse environmental effects within acceptable levels. I also feel it adequately addresses public issues associated with the proposed



action. Details of my rationale for this decision including why I didn't select any of the other alternatives considered in the EA can be found in the enclosed Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) document. Also enclosed is an "Errata Sheet" outlining the changes and corrections made to the EA distributed for review and comment last June. A full copy of the EA is available upon request from our Supervisor's Office in Rutland.

Please note that this decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215.11 under the Notice, Comment, and Appeal Procedures for National Forest System Projects and Activities dated June 4, 2003. An appeal may be filed by individuals and organizations who have submitted substantive written or oral comments during the 30-day comment period for the Mount Tabor Seasonal Employee Housing Facilities EA (June 28 through July 28, 2003). To appeal this decision, a written Notice of Appeal must be postmarked or received within 45 calendar days after the date that the legal notice of this decision is published in our newspaper of record, the Rutland Daily Herald (Rutland, VT). Details how and where to submit appeals are on page 16 of the DN/FONSI. It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project-specific or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. At a minimum, an appeal must include information as specified in 36 CFR 215.14(b).

To obtain a full copy of the final EA or for more information regarding my decision, please contact Jay Strand, USDA Forest Service, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, VT, 05767-9431 (mail); 802-767-4777 (fax); jstrand@fs.fed.us (email); or call Jay directly at 802-767-4261, ext. 522 (Voice), or 802-747-6765 (TTY).

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

Sincerely,

GINA OWENS
District Ranger

- Enclosures: 1. Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact
2. Mount Tabor Seasonal Employee Housing Facilities EA "Errata Sheet"

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