



Northern Forest Alliance

43 State Street • Montpelier, Vermont 05602 • (802) 223-5256 • Fax: (802) 229-4642 • nfa@nfa.info • www.northernforestalliance.org

March 29, 2002

Dear Friends of Sandwich Range,

On behalf of the Northern Forest Alliance (NFA)—a coalition of 43 conservation, forestry, and recreation organizations—we are pleased to endorse your proposal to extend the Sandwich Range Wilderness and to create the Sandwich Notch National Historic Area. NFA's vision is to achieve a sustainable future for the Northern Forest, in which its Wildlands are permanently protected, its forests are sustainably managed, and its local economies and communities are strong and vibrant. We find that your proposal is fully consistent with this vision, and strongly supportive of NFA's mission to protect and enhance the ecological and economic sustainability of this great region.

The Alliance's geographical focus is the 26-million acre Northern Forest region of northern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Although the Sandwich Range is slightly outside of this area, it shares many ecological, economic, and historic characteristics with the Northern Forest. Both areas are characterized by dense forest cover of spruce-fir and northern hardwoods, interspersed with small, rural communities that are economically and spiritually connected to the land that surrounds them. Both areas are also in the process of recovery from many decades of forest clearing for agriculture and intensive timber harvesting, and offer a unique opportunity for restoration to a mature and biologically diverse forest.

The proposed extensions to the Sandwich Range Wilderness would provide a myriad of ecological benefits, all of which complement NFA's work to protect wildlands to your north. By expanding and filling in the borders around the existing Wilderness area—particularly along the 22,300-acre Scar Ridge area—a more viable wildlife corridor would be established, effectively linking the Sandwich Range with northern parts of the National Forest, and beyond to the Northern Forest. Your proposal would also further protect many ecological features that are often underrepresented in this region's conservation lands, including low elevations and valley bottoms, and rare and fragile natural communities.

The NFA is fully supportive of timber harvesting and forest management when it is carried out in a sustainable and ecologically sound manner. Some special areas, however, because of their ecological features and unique opportunities for reserve-level protection, are better suited for non-timber management. For the reasons stated above, and other ecological and recreational values outlined in your proposal, the proposed Sandwich Range extensions meet this standard. In a region that is dominated by private forestlands, most of which is available for timber management, we support your efforts to extend Federal Wilderness status in the Sandwich Range, and to seize the rare opportunity provided by National Forest designation.

The NFA is also very enthusiastic about the grassroots-oriented approach that the Friends of Sandwich Range has taken. We support local communities taking a leadership and coordinating role on conservation initiatives on lands where they live, work, and play. We believe that this is the most responsible and effective approach to achieving long-term effective conservation—a conclusion demonstrated by the success of your partners, the Wonalancet Outdoors Club, in advocating for Wilderness protection in the Sandwich Range in 1984.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your excellent proposal. We wish you the best of luck in this endeavor, and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael R.B. Giammusso". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Michael R.B. Giammusso
Policy & Programs Coordinator