

**Subject:** Smokey Bear Northern District Proposed Project - Final Comments

Some of my comments will be outside the confines of the immediate issue for which comments are being asked. I will give them anyway. Maybe they will be reminders of what you, the reviewer, already know. Or maybe they will give the reviewer pause for thought. Or maybe they will be read and ignored. Regardless of how they will be taken, I must give them, because it is the right thing for me to do.

As a species, we are in the midst of a major extinction event, as the collapse of our agriculture and food systems have decimated our biology, our earth, its natural resources, and its biodiversity of Mother Nature itself, through our food supply, our medical system, our agricultural practices and the use of crop desiccants, chemical

fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. We've been in opposition to Mother Nature in profound ways. We've built technology against her. We've built artificial environments against her. We're continually trying to create comfortable, easy niches that block nature out. For purposes of this comment letter, one specific proposed practice will affect the microbiome of our land.

The microbiome on earth is foundational to our health and the health of the planet. It has, over time, built every single tree, every single plant and animal, fauna. It is the most intelligent of creative forces on the planet. It's the builder of life, the feeder of life. Using chemicals puts undue stress on organisms as well as the microbiome. We need to have the proper mindset. As a species, we need to align our attitude toward supporting the microbiome.

Some say we are 70-120 years away from a major extinction event. If we as a species do the right thing right now, we can reverse that story and over the next 100-200 years, create a healthy biodiverse planet. We have wiped out about 50% of life over the last the 40-50 years. Extinction events have been documented by scientists. We need to avert further extinction and cooperate with Mother Nature, not fight her. We here in Lincoln County can be a participant in this. This is our playing field right now. Just like how the air became cleaner in the U.S. when the current pandemic caused people to decrease driving vehicles, we can change things now to re-create a healthier environment here in our county.

We need to elevate our consciousness about soil bacteria and fungi. When they grow in colonies, when they get to a certain level of biodiversity and population, they suddenly take on a superintelligence and start to act as a coordinated ecosystem rather than a single species; i.e., the whole system can communicate with each part. How would herbicides fit into this miracle of life?

We need to be a co-creator with nature. Thinning the trees is a part of that, but using chemicals to kill growth is not.

Here is an idea: integrate the forest with open land by thinning the undesirable trees and dead matter, which lets the healthy trees grow better and reduces fire potential and that becomes the carbon base for compost. We spend many taxpayer dollars fighting wildfires. Imagine if we had a large number of residents thinning the forest with chainsaws and chippers, turning them into what they were before us Europeans came. Grazing areas for animals would take care of buildup of fuel, and the carbon becomes the fertility for growing food, feeding the soil and allowing earthworms so there would be no hardness, preventing erosion. Using these principles can increase the organic matter.

Soaking stumps with herbicides is like putting a foot on nature's neck. We don't have to dominate and do battle with nature to be safe from fire. Nature needs to be supported, not abused with chemicals; not even on stumps to prevent regrowth, not even in the soil runoff and all the rest of the fallout from using herbicides.

Some people are invested in jobs that are sometimes counterproductive to nature. They are beholden to County heads, state heads, even Washington, DC. They are told what to do, what to use to do it, and how to jump through the proper hoops with the public. Let's leave a legacy of healthy ecology for our children and grandchildren. Let's not open the door now to the use of herbicides so that down the road more use of chemicals will be used because we haven't chosen the better way to be safe from wildfire.

I am told the FDA has not approved the listed herbicides and their adjuvants, which is another reason not to use them.

*For personal reasons, I am not in favor of risking my bee hives and their health with air-borne herbicide mist. One-quarter mile buffer is not enough. For example, participants at a recent birthday party in Carrizozo, 12 miles away, let a mylar balloon escape and the west wind blew it into the trees near our home in White Oaks. Twelve miles! The east winds that blow in our county are even stronger. Those east winds can easily carry air-borne herbicide mist to my hives and kill my bees as well as other pollinators.*

Regarding this project, please use mechanical and manual means exclusively to thin the trees and prevent re-growth of the alligator junipers. Please do not use herbicides.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.