

As a lifelong resident, business and property owner of the Pinecrest area, I submit the following comments in opposition to the proposed *Pinecrest Basin Management Direction – Community Center Forest Plan Amendment and Special Use Permit #68965*.

Pinecrest is a unique, popular recreation area with limited infrastructure, seasonal economic realities, parking limitations and seasonal congestion issues that are not adequately analyzed within the Environmental Assessment (EA). The proposal would authorize a substantial expansion of commercial activity in the center of the Pinecrest Basin without sufficiently evaluating the cumulative impacts on traffic, parking, public access, public safety, environmental resources, or the long-term effects to the area.

This proposal involves a permanent Forest Plan Amendment. If approved, the expanded allowances and revised management direction established through this amendment could remain in place indefinitely. Despite the long-term implications of this action, the EA fails to adequately evaluate the broader impacts or future operational intensity that may result from establishing this precedent within the Basin. The proposal represents a substantial departure from existing management direction and a significant expansion of commercial use on National Forest System lands.

The EA further acknowledges that the current operator has been conducting commercial activities that are not authorized under the existing permit. Specifically, the document states the facility “currently operates as a coffee shop, event space, and lodging in an area of the Stanislaus National Forest which does not explicitly allow commercial services.” The Stanislaus National Forest has therefore acknowledged that the operator has knowingly operated commercial services outside the scope of its authorization. Rather than addressing or correcting those violations, this proposal appears to retroactively legitimize unauthorized commercial operations through a permanent amendment to the Forest Plan.

This raises serious concerns regarding consistency, fairness, and enforcement of existing regulations governing National Forest System lands. The operator’s demonstrated noncompliance also raises legitimate concerns regarding the ability to fully comply with future permit terms and conditions.

The stated intent of the EXPLORE Act is to enhance recreation opportunities within rural communities on National Forest lands. However, this proposal would instead concentrate recreational intensity and expanded commercial activity into the center of the Pinecrest Basin rather than supporting dispersed recreation opportunities throughout the forest. Expanding overlapping commercial services within the Basin threatens to alter the mountain character of Pinecrest and shift the focus away from recreation, conservation, and public access toward intensified commercial development.

Existing private lands and commercial businesses along the Highway 108 corridor already provide lodging, dining, retail, and visitor services that support the recreation economy. Those existing businesses, infrastructure limitations, and cumulative impacts should be meaningfully

considered when evaluating both the purpose and need for this proposal and its consequences to surrounding communities.

I also object to the characterization of “consultation” contained within the EA. Although I am listed as a consulted party, I was never solicited for substantive input, data, or analysis regarding this proposal. My inclusion appears to be based solely on general inquiries or receipt of correspondence rather than any meaningful outreach or consultation process. Listing individuals as “consulted” inaccurately suggests that the agency engaged in outreach, requested information, and incorporated those perspectives into the decision-making process. In my case, that did not occur. The consultation record is therefore misleading and does not accurately reflect meaningful public engagement.

Decisions affecting the Pinecrest Basin carry long-term consequences not only for visitors, but also for the residents, workers, families, property owners, and business owners who help sustain these mountain communities.

Pinecrest’s role within the National Forest system should remain centered on recreation, conservation, public access, and stewardship of public lands — not expanded commercial intensification through permanent amendments that fundamentally alter the Basin’s long-standing management direction.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully urge the Forest Service to reject the proposed Forest Plan Amendment and Special Use Permit #68965.

Respectfully submitted,

Christy Cashman