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First name: Sue
Last name: Clark
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Landscape Scale Vegetation Management in Catalina-Rincon Mountains (FireScape) #27526
Public Comment from:
Sue Clark
GSCA cabin owner #31A
5362 N. Paseo de la Terraza
Tucson, AZ 85750
shue_1@comcast.net
Treating the whole Coronado National Forest area and the whole ecosystem makes good sense environmentally, scientifically, and economically. Most negative impact from the proposed action would be short term, very controlled and more predictable. The main negative impact of the no action alternative is possible catastrophic wildfire. This negative impact would be longlasting, unpredictable and not controlled. The action alternative is a better use of resources and has significant positive long term effects with minimal short term effects. Table 14 with the Fire Tolerance comparison clearly shows the benefit of the proposed action in terms of fire tolerance. This is very positive.

Although I support the overall concept and plan, I do have some questions and concerns about a few details.

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* There is a previously used fire break on Hunter's Ridge above Bear Wallow in the Mountain Top group. It is written into the current Community Wildfire Protection Plan to maintain that. It is not mentioned or noted in any text or maps in this plan that I could find. As a cabin owner that uses the water system that is fed by the spring in Bear Wallow, I believe this to be very important to protecting this important water resource. The fuel load in that area is very high and I see that it is being considered for different types of treatment, which I appreciate. But since this fire fighting feature is already in place and just needs maintenance, I do not understand why it is not included in this plan.

* The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that is quoted is not the most recent CWPP. The 2004 plan is quoted and the plan was updated in 2013. I don't have a problem with the content of the quote, but my concern is that there is a more recent plan that is not being used. 2004 was shortly after the destructive Aspen Fire. There were many changes in the condition of the forest and in the current CWPP.

* Using prescribed fire to reduce the woody fuels on grasslands could make the area more attractive and accessible to ATV off road use in those areas- specifically Reddington Pass and Miller Creek. What plan will be in place to reduce the potential impact from increased ATV use in these areas?

* The 300' fuelwood buffer would encourage and allow for wood collection in those areas thus reducing the fuel in those areas and providing a benefit to those that are collecting the wood. I think this is a positive thing and my comment has more to do with the implementation of this part of the plan. In the past I have tried to participate in the permitting for gathering firewood and it took me five tries to actually get the piece of paper in my hand. I would suggest that most people will not be that persistent and will just collect without it being documented or permitted. Please make sure the public information is specific and correct. Also, please have more personnel approved to issue the permits. Either allow the people at the Sabino Canyon Visitor's Center desk to write and issue the permits or have more people available to issue permits. If you are expecting businesses and the public to help in the fire and ecosystem management in this way

and to abide by the rules and regulations of the Forest Service, there needs to be more personnel available for this purpose.