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First name: Barbara

Last name: Marks

Organization: Blue Elementary School District 22

Title: President

Comments: There has been a school on Blue River for over 125 hundred years. The Blue Elementary School is currently K through 12 and one of the few remaining one room schools in the United States. Our school provides a unique learning experience for students, partly because of its location in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. They leave school with a good education and a healthy respect for the forest and the community.

In the past, schools in counties that have National Forests within them received funding from user fees collected from timber harvesting, grazing fees, recreation fees, etc. because of the small amount of private lands within these forests and rural counties. This funding for Greenlee County schools went from approximately \$800,000 down to \$60,000 following the 1995 grazing permit renewals with their drastic cuts and the halt of the beneficial forest management tool of timber harvesting. These programs used to pay for themselves and provide monies for schools and roads, but because of the drastic cuts, the Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program was started. Any time we see more chances of revenue threatened, we try to get involved. The tax base in our district is very important for our survival and we try to keep the school tax low for our residents.

We are concerned that the socio-economic study parameters used skewed the results. Connecting Greenlee, Apache, and Navajo Counties with Maricopa County is like comparing blueberries with a watermelon [ndash] very little similarities. Throwing them into the same pot will most assuredly lessen any economic impact these changes can make. When other forests would use smaller numbers of smaller counties, why did the A-S use twelve? Arizona only has fifteen, so might as well used them all, but that wouldn[rsquo]t be right or fair either. There are no perfect formulas, but we feel another study is in order to more realistically show effects. The Journal of the National Association of Administrative Law Judges (Vol 20, Issue2, Article2) provides a clear explanation that it is not possible to separate scientific facts from political, normative, and legal issues. And, [ldquo]there is a [lsquo]large gray area between pure science and pure policy[rsquo] that cannot be addressed purely by scientific analysis because of the uncertainty or the presence of economic or social factors. Therefore, an appropriate level of social and economic analysis is surely critical not only to comply with NEPA, but also specific to legal, normative, and political issues. This is important to consider for a Forest such as the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest surrounded by rural communities that depend on Forest resources for social and economic stability.

Believe it or not, our school benefits directly from hunters camping and visiting our area. Dusring the Blue River Cowbells[rsquo] Food Sale when school is not in session, hunters have made donations to our school and some have even come at other times of the year to donate money or items. There must be clarification about camping along the Blue, since it is unclear whether it is allowed or not.

Thank you for your consideration,