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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am vehemently opposed the SFMLRP thinning plan, primarily because I have personally seen the results of previous thinning projects in the Santa Fe National Forest, and they have not turned out as promised.

Among the negatives I have seen in the thinned areas include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

1. The removal of trees far larger than had been outlined has resulted in already serious erosion problems that are easily visible in any area that's not table-flat. The runoff from this erosion has already impacted local water sources for the people living in parts of Glorieta.

2. The runoff from seasonal rains has increased because the trees that would normally soak up that rain have been removed, thereby increasing erosional problems.

3. The negative impacts on wildlife have been significant. Prey animals that once depended on forest cover for their survival, are now exposed much of the time. In an effort to "save themselves" numerous deer have "migrated" onto a privately held 58-acre tract that's nearby. Others have moved up to the until-now untreated areas. They will soon be forced out of those areas as well

A. Abert's squirrels, who prefer travelling in the forest canopy to avoid predators as diverse as foxes, coyotes, bobcats, have also moved out of the thinned areas because with the removal of the trees they were forced to travel on the open ground, where they were at considerably higher risk.

B. When their prey move on, so do the predators. Where it was once commonplace to see foxes, coyotes and the occasional bobcat in the now-thinned areas they are no longer there.

C. Anecdotally, foxes, skunks and bobcats have also migrated from the thinned areas onto parcels of private land as outlined in Number 3 above.

At least one local resident has claimed, without any proof whatsoever, that opposition to the thinning project is coming from a very small minority of residents. There has been no public opinion polling to back up this charge.

In one public meeting with the USFS a speaker with a supposed scientific background stated that the thinning would enable wildlife to get around the forest easier, a statement that apparently went unchallenged. Are we then to assume that for literally thousands of years antlered animals such as deer and elk have been "trapped" among the trees, unable to move around freely?

For decades the USFS mistakenly followed a plan of complete fire suppression, a policy that has now been largely rescinded as more scientific evidence is gathered demonstrating that regular, naturally produced fires that are carefully monitored are essential for removing excessive undergrowth while also keeping the forest healthy. This is the plan that should be followed in the SFNF, not thinning.

By using carefully controlled burns on small acreages the forest will remain not only a healthy environment for our wildlife, it will also protect the watershed, which will absolutely be negatively impacted by this massive thinning project.

The ironic part of all of this is that we -the people the USFS is allegedly supposed to be serving - know that our words and desires will be ignored because, as I have personally seen in my interactions with USFS personnel, the USFS attitude is that only it knows what's best for the forest, and no other opinion counts.

It's that kind of close-minded thinking and attitude that will ultimately result on the long-term destruction of the forest.

Sincerely,

Jon Asher