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Organization: Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment (TuCARE)

Title: Executive Director

Comments: Please see the attached comment letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed SERAL 2.0 project. Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment (TuCARE) applauds the Forest's efforts to reduce fuels, and to create a healthier and safer national forest. In the project details, we did find two areas that we hope will be adjusted before taking this proposed project further.

TuCARE is a community based non-profit organization founded in 1988. Our membership is made up of a cross-section of our community including local businesspersons, educators, and those actively engaged in working daily with our natural resources. TuCARE supports the wise use of the many resources on our federal lands. Multiple-use policies allow for everyone to benefit. TuCARE believes that man must play an active role to ensure our resources are available both now and in the future.

TuCARE objects to the designation in section 2.05 Targeted Grazing that proposes the use of sheep or goats as the only method of livestock grazing. Currently much of the Stanislaus is under contract with local cattle grazing permittees. It seems as if the use of cattle that are already adapted to the Stanislaus terrain was not even considered when this proposed SERAL 2.0 was drafted. Why would that be? Bypassing what is already working well, or as well as can be expected with the low AUM's and limited on schedules, in favor of untested sheep and goat herds seems like a waste of time, money and established resources. There are quick and easily achieved plans that could be put into place using the permittees that are already on the landscape, and that have been so for since the existence of the Stanislaus.

Furthermore, it behooves the Agency to rely on the wealth of knowledge that our local Cattlemen Association and our Stanislaus Grazing Permittees Association can bring to this plan. In fact, just this fall, you specifically said that there would be more discussion and engagement with these groups as forest plans were created going forward. Please remember that you have dedicated livestock managers who are willing to partner with the Stanislaus, and there is no need for additional, untrained, and inexperienced livestock operators on the forest.

Point number two that is of concern to TuCARE in this plan is 2.06 Broadcast Burning. Last spring an area of SERAL that was scheduled to be prepped for burning by a contractor was instead burned prior to site treatment. This turned into a large event that cost well more than what it would have cost if the plan to prepare and treat prior to burning had been followed. TuCARE is asking that no fire be applied to a landscape prior to any initial site prep treatment being done. This helps ensure that when fire is subsequently used, it can be controlled without significant loss of resources and/or resources being wasted to control an out-of-control fire. The description in 2.06 sounds as if that is what is planned, but the need is to make sure that it is adhered to going forward with SERAL 2.0. TUCARE is committed to supporting the excellent work that has been done, is being done and will be done on the Stanislaus National Forest. We believe that what is good for the forest will be good for our community. We ask that you include cattle grazing in the section on Targeted Grazing and include strong language instructing managers to adhere to burning protocol that will protect resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely, Melinda Fleming,

Executive Director Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources & Environment