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

Title: Executive Director

Comments: August 17, 2020

Jason Kuiken, Forest Supervisor
USDA - Stanislaus National Forest
19777 Greenley Rd.
Sonora, CA 95370

RE: Social and Economic Resilience Across the Landscape (SERAL) project 56500

Dear Supervisor Kuiken:

Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources and Environment (TuCARE) would like to comment on the proposed SERAL project on the Stanislaus National Forest. 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 public 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.

We believe that the SERAL Project could be what is needed now on our forest. For over 30 years we have educated the public about the need for true forest health. We define a healthy, multi-use forest as one that is resilient to drought, pests, and fire. In addition, one that supports a vital watershed and adds values such as wildlife habitat, recreational access, and economic infusion in the local economy.

TuCARE would like to see the Stanislaus National Forest restored to the vegetative conditions that can survive drought and catastrophic wildfire. If the SERAL Project is implemented, we hope that the inclusion of a maintenance mechanism. Perhaps one that rotates throughout the project area on an annual schedule. Because TuCARE is a proponent of including local stakeholders in all decisions on adjacent public lands, we hope the SNF will coordinate all plans with County government, TuCARE, the local Fire Safe Councils, and affected landowners. TuCARE has created a non-profit funding mechanism with the Sonora Area Foundation that will seek to provide funds for large and small wildfire reduction projects on private lands adjacent to public lands. The Wildfire Community Protection Fund will work with Fire Safe Councils' current fuel-break plans, in addition to any work being done on public lands, to create a mile-wide fuel-break in critical areas of Tuolumne County. We look forward to the SERAL Project's quick success with the belief that this will encourage landowners to follow suit on private lands. We encourage the FS to consider that less than ½ mile wide fuel-break on public lands, abutting to ½ mile wide fuel-break on private lands, may not achieve the desired outcome with the current condition of our forests.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. TuCARE is committed to the wise use of our natural resources. It is our intention to provide comments that will reflect wise use and reasonable solutions to problems shared by all.
Sincerely,

Melinda Fleming, Executive Director