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First name: Evelyn
Last name: Kunkel
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I am writing to comment on the Santa Fe Mountains landscape resiliency project, and the Encino Vista Landscape restoration project. I am currently a Santa Fe resident also living part time in Los Alamos, so I spend a lot of time both in the Santa Fe National forest and the Jemez. I am an avid hiker. I go to the forest to relax and unwind. I also wildcraft mushrooms and medicinal herbs for personal use. My connection to the land is a precious and sacred to me.

I am writing to request that a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement, including a full range of alternatives to the currently proposed project, be undertaken. The amount of smoke already in the air from wildfires has been challenging for my health and I do not see more smoke as a good idea for anyone's health in the area. Due to the significant impact on human health, I request a full EIS for this project. Also, we need to have more options of other plans, including a conservation alternative. We need to be able to find an option that is both beneficial to the public and the forest ecosystem, and I do not believe the current proposal is beneficial. We do not have proof that prescribed burns substantially replace wildfire or do not increase the amount of smoke we breathe. We need an analysis that will show how much more smoke the public would be breathing should this project be implemented. Widespread burning and aggressive thinning of the forest will also degrade the forest and reduce its scenic qualities.

I request that a condition based approach NOT be used for the analysis of this project. The current parameters are so generalized we will not know what the treatments are nor how they will be carried out in a site specific way. Also, the environmental assessment does not give clear locations for the forest treatments. We need to know where they would actually be, without loopholes allowing the forest service to determine where they will be at a later date. Roadless areas need to be conserved in a natural state.

The best available science must be included in the planning and analysis of this project. It is not appropriate to cherry pick only science that supports this plan. Science from a conservation perspective must be included. The science needs to include the existence of an understory, which is a natural condition at this time. We need science that includes more evidence about historical fire regimes. We also need to know whether this will impact the habitat of the spotted owls; many studies question that this will be good for their habitat. We also need to analyze health impacts of increased burning on the public. Finally, the amount of burning- every 5-15 years- is too frequent, and thinning at the level proposed will approach a clearcut. This leaves the forest too dry and open, and allows increased severity of wind during fires, which will fan flames during wildfires.

The forest service needs to include the public in the analysis process. We have not been given sufficient notice of comment periods. The forest service has not given the public the full story, by omitting science that does not support their perspective. The public has not been allowed to view any of the over 5,000 public scoping comments online or in person. Comments released by the FOIA act will take too long to be made available to the public for it to be a reasonable method of information release to the public. By the time they are received, the project would already be underway. The forest service has understated the project to the public, for example stating that they will only be thinning small trees when In reality the environmental assessment states that larger trees will be thinned.

I request that the forest service planning and analysis do the following. It should include an Environmental Impact Statement with a full range of alternatives. I request that the plan greatly reduce the number of trees to be removed and greatly reduce the number of acres to be treated, by at least 75%. With climate change a growing concern we need more trees for carbon sequestration and to hold moisture in the forest. The plan should increase the time between prescribed burn treatments. It should also leave most of the forest understory.

It should close and decomission forest roads, and not build more roads or improve existing roads unless a critical need exists. It should do more analysis of the impact of this plan on Mexican Spotted Owls. It should keep cows out of riparian areas, and out of project area entirely if possible. Finally, it should reduce the amount of prescribed burn smoke by 75%.

Thank you for your consideration. Our forests are a precious resource and the public deserves to be included in planning for them.