

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/12/2021 10:14:34 PM

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Comments: These comments are in regard to the Forest Service's (FS) R5 Post Disturbance Hazardous Tree Management Project for the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5):

The project includes cutting, logging, and removing thousands of "hazard" trees (both living and dead trees that burned over past fire seasons) along roads, trails, and facilities in 10 National Forests. However, the FS doesn't mention wilderness anywhere in the project's scoping letter, but the maps are unclear as to whether wilderness is included.

There are many trails and roads included that abut wilderness boundaries, making the impacts to wilderness unclear. Potentially, the Marble Mountains, Trinity Alps, Kaiser, Ansel Adams, John Muir, Golden Trout, Monarch, Jennie Lakes, Domeland, Yolla Bolly Middle Eel, Snow Mountain, Yuki, and Bucks Lake Wildernesses could be affected by logging and other clearing, although the Forest Service fails to reveal any details in its scoping documents.

Like the environmental group Wilderness Watch, I am opposed to using chainsaws to clear trails in wilderness. Visitors to wilderness should be allowed to experience nature on its own terms, which includes risks that naturally exist. Falling trees are a natural hazard that anyone who enters a Wilderness must be willing to accept—these are not "managed" forests, gardens, or city parks.

Additionally, the FS should use crosscut saws, not chainsaws, to clear trails of only the fallen trees that must be removed. Dead and dying trees should be left alone in wilderness, as is the definition of wilderness and is vital for the health of its biosphere.

The Forest Service could post warning signs at trailheads alerting visitors to the risk, and letting visitors decide whether they want to accept the risk or hike somewhere else. Dead trees should be allowed to fall naturally, with crosscut saws then used to clear trails of fallen trees that must be cleared. This presents an outstanding educational opportunity to inform visitors of the benefits of wilderness, of allowing natural processes to run their course, and the value of maintaining traditional skills.

The Forest Service should exclude all Wilderness areas from this project, including any encroachment from activity on wilderness boundaries.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to comment.