

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/13/2021 12:16:05 AM

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Comments: Leave Wilderness trees alone

The Forest Service (FS) is seeking public comments on its 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. The FS doesn't mention Wilderness anywhere in the project's scoping letter, but the maps are unclear as to whether Wilderness is included. We urge you to take action by the November 15 comment deadline.

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.

You can view maps of the included trails, etc. here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=60950>

Wilderness Watch opposes 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.

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.