

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/13/2021 2:22:41 AM

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Comments: As an environmentally motivated voter and a native Westerner who understands the importance of preserving our amazing nature and especially our Wilderness Areas, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on R5 Post Disturbance Hazardous Tree Management Project for the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5). This project includes cutting, logging, and removing thousands of trees that the Forest Service terms "hazard" trees (both living trees and ones that died during recent fire seasons) along roads, trails, and facilities in 10 National Forests.

I am surprised that the Forest Service does not mention Wilderness at all in the project's scoping letter, and the maps are not clear as to whether Wilderness is included. However, many of the trails and roads included about 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.

First of all, the Forest Service must exclude from this project all Wilderness Areas and any encroachment from its activities on wilderness boundaries. For these areas, there are other, natural ways of coping with the natural phenomenon of dead trees, which visitors to Wilderness should be allowed to experience as part of contact with nature on its own terms that is one of the express purposes of the Wilderness Areas. 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 therefore 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.

Because dead trees provide habitat in their various stages of decay for multiple species and even miniature ecosystems, they should be allowed to fall naturally, with crosscut saws then used only to clear trails of fallen trees that must be cleared. Allowing dead trees to undergo their natural decay and hosting of species presents an outstanding educational opportunity to inform visitors of the benefits of Wilderness, and the value of maintaining traditional skills.

I urge the Forest Service to ensure that no compromise to the integrity of the Wilderness Areas that belong to all the American people will occur as a result of this project, which really seems to be a gift to the private, profit-making timber industry.