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Comments:

To whom it may concern:

I take this opportunity to make a public comment regarding the "R5 Post Disturbance Hazardous Tree Management Project" for the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5).

I oppose the cutting, logging, and removing of 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 Forest Service does not 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.

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

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 since 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 are prepared 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 if they 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. Fallen trees should be left to decompose since the nutrients are required by organisms in the ecosystem.

In addition to their ecological role as home to native animals and their value to people, forests should be protected because they have an intrinsic value as do individual trees, since they are living beings. Humans have destroyed more than enough forests and other natural areas and it is necessary to protect the ones that remain. Native animals that are still living their original natural way of life should be left in peace to continue living in their homeland as they have done for millions of years. Planet Earth belongs to all species.

I have written regarding this issue even though I do not live in the United States of America because I support the protection of forests, native plants and animals and indigenous peoples around the world. I lived in Australia from 1970 to 1992. Since I did not wish to be part of a country in which the large-scale destruction of natural habitats, logging of forests and extermination of native animals continue to take place and which is the result of genocide against indigenous peoples, I returned to my country of origin and encourage others to do the same. About 48% of Croatia is covered with forests of natural composition.

Please keep the forests in the Pacific Southwest Region protected in their natural state.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Validzic