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Title:

Comments: I worked for the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) in 1978, and fell in love with New Mexico. In retrospect, it was the best job I ever had. That idealized perspective, of how the Forest Service serves the nation and protects natural resources, has since been tarnished by experiences in working through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as an environmental compliance reviewer. It became clear that the profitable business of forest management was often framed in the context of finding the right spin-doctoring for revenue and exploitation to continue. In other words, the spirit of NEPA law is as important as the letter of the law, and the Forest Service takes a jaded approach from the start of any project. Of course, there are competent and dedicated people within the Forest Service, but key decision-makers have failed in egregious manners, and the cascading consequences are crucial considerations in the Climate Emergency. I have hopes that the next generation of Forest Service workers have better ethics, higher inclusivity, and the deeper understanding of the commitment necessary for preservation and adaptation of all aspects of old growth forests, water (quality, access, and stability of sources), long-term land management planning, transition zones, buffer areas, and sensitive, threatened, and endangered species considerations. The old mindsets will only cause further harm, as evidenced in recent New Mexico fires. The Rio Grande has been dry. When will the extensive data collected by the Forest Service be put to use in a meaningful way toward effective sustainability, with choices that clearly address the problems that the Fireset* Service itself has created? Federal old growth and mature forests are the essential baseline. Why does anyone have to remind this organization of the importance?