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Comments: As a hiker and backpacker who cares deeply about the Los Padres National Forest and the San Rafael Wilderness, I am concerned that the draft environmental assessment (EA) for the Porter, Pine Canyon, and South Fork La Brea Allotments Project is woefully insufficient. After 13 years since the project was first announced, the draft EA appears rushed and incomplete (typical of reports from the Los Padres National Forest).

Livestock grazing damages watersheds, causes streambank erosion, introduces invasive plants, and contaminates water sources with bacteria. The USFS falsely claims that giardia is the major source of water-born sickness among hikers, but in fact (as documented by published literature) it is actually bacteria from livestock that is the major problem. The USFS cannot admit this fact, however, because to do so would be to acknowledge that commercial livestock are incompatible with other less damaging uses of our national lands.

I ask that your agency go back to the drawing board to analyze additional alternatives to the proposed action. These should include at least one alternative that would have a lower maximum number of livestock allowed in each of the three allotments, especially where they overlap the San Rafael Wilderness and designated critical habitat for the California red-legged frog and steelhead.

Your agency should also commit to releasing all of the environmental analysis documents being relied upon before or at the beginning of the public comment period for a new draft EA. Myself and other stakeholders are unable to fully understand the basis for many of the findings in the current draft EA due to so many referenced documents being withheld from public consumption.

Outdoor activities such as hiking and backpacking are much more valuable to the economy than commercial livestock grazing. Yet the USFS continues to favor livestock over these much less damaging uses of our national lands because the USFS has been captured by the livestock industry. It is past time to change direction and recognize the value that less harmful activities have in our national forests.