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Comments: The West Wall Defensible Fuels Profile Zone

I live in Pine Valley of which the West Wall is its west boundary. I am a coordinator of the Pine Valley Firewire Community that has been around since 2021. We help folks in the valley with fuels reduction projects around their structures. We encourage folks to make their homes more fire resilient and hardened so they won't burn down in a wildfire. We don't think that cutting down the forests is the way to reduce wildfire risks.

The purpose and need for the project says it is to maintain fuels breaks and reduce the risk of "uncharacteristic" wildfire. This should be accomplished without the use of new roads or commercial logging methods.

This project is being conducted using a Categorical Exclusion (CE) which is suppose to include a "collaborative process." What will that entail?

Hand thinning and prescribed burns near private property boundaries and along roads should be the focus of this project.

No new temporary roads should be built.

Do not cut down any trees greater than 21 inches dbh in order to protect the character and function of the forest. All old and mature growth trees need to be protected.

The west wall is an important part of the valley's watershed and disturbance to the ground and creeks on the west wall will impact that function so please take care to decrease the impacts to the perennial and intermittent streams. This area has some steep slopes which can be easily damaged by commercial logging methods and this is worrisome.

There is a lot of wildlife (deer, elk, bears, wolves, etc) in the area that depends on the cover and cooler conditions in these moister environments. Thinning projects need to consider the impacts to these animals and avoid needlessly stressing them.

Regarding fuels reduction treatments- We can't thin the forests to save them. The studies are out that thinning forests, especially in an industrial manner, does not keep forest fires from spreading. Hot, dry, windy weather is the driver of fires. And fires are part of the healthy natural cycle of these forests. Commercial logging projects actually create more open, hotter, dryer conditions which could exacerbate the problem. Recent logging operations on the west wall are a testament to this happening. Please use non-commercial hand thinning methods and prescribed fire to keep your touch "light" on this important local forest environment.

Thank you for considering my comments.