Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/9/2024 8:53:26 PM
First name: Ben
Last name: Dolan
Organization:
Title:
Comments: To whom it may concern at the Forest Service,

I am a resident of Las Huertas canyon. My wife, our three small boys, and I live on Hwy 165 near MM 9, which is about a 1/4 mi. from the place where NM 165 crosses the north boundary of the National Forest. My property backs up to National Forest on the west side.

I am absolutely opposed to prescribed fires in Las Huertas canyon.

There is no way to safely burn the narrow stretch along Las Huertas creek north to the Forest border. Cutting firelines would not only be wildly difficult along the zone's borders (impossible in some places, as the canyon is steep), but also destructive.

Our 150+ year-old acequia system would undoubtedly suffer extensively from a prescribed burn; we are a group of 20 or so households who maintain the acequia by hand every year. We use the water to grow gardens and orchards, and also simply to maintain the tree cover in the valley, which in many ways has suffered from the decreased creek flows due to forest overcrowding.

However, I agree that thinning is absolutely necessary in the creek bed to preserve stream flow and to minimize future fires. This very narrow stretch along NM 165 could be mechanically thinned in a variety of ways; in many places, the thick belt of unthinned trees isn't more than 500 ft wide. I and many others in the community of neighbors in the canyon would be glad to assist in a mechanical thinning plan. Many more households in the area could benefit from the fire wood. Also, members of San Felipe and Santa Ana pueblos could be brought in to this project: though they live further from the canyon, they historically have used its wood, and would be a worthy end user for wood removed from the canyon.

Also, consider allowing for grazing permits in select areas that can be fenced, and where water resources can be protected from trampling. Herds of goats are being used in the Rio Grande bosque for this same reason; residents of Las Huertas canyon kept and grazed their goats here historically. Because goats are foragers rather than grazers, they tend to eat leaves first, and the most accessible. When there are other options, they leave large trees untouched and instead focus on weeds, saplings, and low-lying brush.

Thank you for your consideration. I hope to be a part of the thinning process in the canyon, as I love it here and want to protect it for my children.

Sincerely,
Ben Dolan