Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/13/2024 10:24:02 PM
First name: Kayla
Last name: Lucero-Matteucci
Organization: San Antonio de Las Huertas Land Grant
Title: Member
Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

As a member of the San Antonio de las Huertas land grant, resident of the historic village of Las Placitas, and acequia parciante, I am writing in my personal capacity to express my disappointment with your plan to pursue controlled burns in our mountains. For decades, we have contacted you to recommend manual thinning and the removal of fuels from the canyon/forest. You have blatantly ignored us and failed in your responsibility to maintain these lands, of which we and the original inhabitants, the Pueblo people, are historic stewards.

It is concerning that you have neglected this land for the better part of a century, and now you abruptly decide to commence controlled burns-a short cut and lazy solution in response to a persistent and entrenched problem. Many of our residents and land grant members would lack the funds to rebuild their homes in the event of a fire. Moreover, a fire in this area would render our village of Placitas uninhabitable; we rely upon the acequia system for our residential water use, and the particulates from a fire would make their way into our water supply, making it unsafe to drink.

The Sandia Collaborative, which represents a wide range of stakeholders from across our communities, presented you with a safe and sensible plan to mitigate wildfire risks and protect our watershed, and you rejected it without explanation. We demand a seat at the table to negotiate a mutually agreed solution in concert with Pueblos whose watersheds and ceremonial rights to these lands make them a necessary participant in this process.

The area presents high risk for wildfires, and your proposal to conduct controlled burns in arid Northern New Mexico during the warmer months of the year (which, given our warming climate, can now include spring and autumn) is reckless to say the least. Have we not learned from the recent history of the Calf Canyon/Hermit's Peak fires? Come to our community, listen to our local experts in wildfire behavior, soil health, and water protection. Pause your plans and make a long overdue effort to engage us in your decision making. You are causing harm by excluding us, and you are incurring significant liabilities to human health, safety, and wellbeing with your current course of action. There is still time to make this right.

We will be holding community meetings, with land grants, acequias, Sandia Collaborative members, Pueblos, elected officials, and members of the press invited to attend. We invite you to begin a conversation with us. We are committed to working with you to reach a solution that protects this shared land and water. This comment form is not an accessible or appropriate way for you to adequately gather public input. I have spoken with countless residents who oppose your plan, many of whom are elderly, disabled, or don't have computers. Please look beyond this limited mode of public input, and earnestly seek our engagement.

Sincerely,
Kayla Lucero-Matteucci