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First name: Phillip

Last name: Clark

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing to object to your plan for prescribed burning as a solution to reduce the wildfire threat (North Sandia Fuels Reduction project) in the Las Huertas Canyon watershed / NM 165 corridor. I am sure that, by now, you have received multiple letters from the community on their objections to this approach to fuel reduction, so I would like to focus on several areas in which I believe the Forest Service has failed to present and develop this plan. The plan is suffused with general statements and examples of poor planning when dealing with actions that have the kind of potential widespread community damage that occurred with the Calf Canyon fire.

1) I see nothing in this document that presents your plans to hold public meetings to clearly explain and justify your solution to the fire threat in the identified areas and gather public input. I am aware that the Forest Service has placed emphasis on gathering input through public meetings in the past. The plan as presented does none of this, which is a major failing, in my opinion. The start dates in the publicly presented plan do not even seem to allow for public meetings. That is a real disappointment.

2) I do not believe that the descriptions of areas for treatment are adequate. The terms Las Huertas Canyon watershed / NM 165 corridor are not specific enough for the public to clearly understand where your planned efforts are to occur. Your statement in the scoping plan, "... hazard tree mitigation and thinning may occur throughout the NM-165 corridor," is an example of this vagueness. The NM-165 corridor extends from US-25 all the way to near the Sandia ski area. Do you plan on doing treatments anywhere/everywhere along this corridor? And what does 'may' mean in this sentence? That word does not speak well for the clarity of your planning.

3) Given the overwhelming objections in public comments to doing a prescribed burn in the Las Huertas area, I am disappointed that the Forest Service has not previously responded clearly to the treatments suggested by the Sandia Fuels Reduction committee of the Sandia Collaborative. It is a well-thought-out plan that focuses on manual actions and eschews any kind of burn treatment, given the levels of risk the area presents.

4) I would have expected to see some planning on how the Forest Service would deal with out-of-control fires resulting from any loss of control in a prescribed burn. Given the physical conditions in the Las Huertas Canyon area, I should think the experience of the Calf Canyon disaster would force some kind of contingency planning. There is no evidence in your plan of this kind of planning. This implies to me that no serious thought has been given to the implied risks the physical conditions present. This does not inspire confidence.

There are other comments that would be suitable for your plan, but a response to the issues cited above would go a long way toward helping us understand the specific plan.