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Comments: We have received and read the proposed action. Overall, we agree with the proposal. We appreciate your work to help reduce fire danger in the area.

The San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant, Las Huertas Community Ditch, Las Acequias de Placitas, and residents of Placitas have concerns about using fire in the Las Huertas watershed. Members of the Las Huertas Community Ditch are concerned about removing too much groundcover and having sediment wash into the ditch. The local community groups and residents request that fire not be used in Las Huertas Canyon.

We have two questions/comments about Las Huertas Creek. The Proposed Action states:

"Las Huertas Canyon is associated with a riparian management zone that extends a minimum of 300 feet from either side of the edge of the floodplain. Within this zone, proposed activities could occur that maintain or improve the desired condition. This could include hazard tree mitigation, selective thinning, and prescribed fire. Additional project design features also apply."

But there is no Desired Condition described for the riparian vegetation. It is a small area, but important. We suggest a DC:

"Vegetation consists of native species that are riparian obligates or facultative riparian species. Trees are deciduous, except for some scattered large conifers, larger than 16" dbh, or 24" dsh for juniper and pinyon."

Here is a suggestion for how to restore native vegetation along Las Huertas Creek:

Cut: all one-seed juniper <24" dsh
- Pinon <16" dsh
- Rocky Mountain juniper < 16" dsh
- Ponderosa <16" dbh
- White fir < 16" dbh
- Douglas fir < 16" dbh
- Siberian elm, tree of heaven, tamarisk, any size

Work will be done by a hand crew, with chainsaws.

Limb up conifers to a height of 5'.

Cut dead standing trees < 18" to reduce fire danger; keep trees >18" for wildlife snags. It's okay to cut any trees that create a safety hazard for operations.

Cut trees into lengths < 6', and place alongside the road for firewood removal. Smaller diameter wood, < 3", will be chipped, and the chips removed.

Keep riparian and desirable trees and shrubs: cottonwood, maple, box elder, chokecherry, sumac, ash, NM olive, redosier dogwood, willow, wild rose, NM locust, oak, aspen, and wild fruit trees. Try to limit damage to these species during operations.

Leave trees that have been incorporated into the streambed to slow floodwater and for wildlife habitat.

For a distance of 50 feet from the road any trees that are cut will be cut on the diagonal with the freshly exposed portion of the stump facing away from the road for aesthetic reasons.
The second question is: What will be done about the Siberian elm, tamarisk, and Tree of Heaven? We understand that there is no authority to use herbicides. Is that correct? The trees could be girdled. This has been effective for Siberian elm along the Rio Grande.

Finally, we request to be kept informed of plans and implementation, and to have a place at the table as specific project plans are made.