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Comments: The Hermit's Peak / Calf Canyon wildfire was a catastrophic and devastating fire. There are parts of the impacted forests that burned at high severity and may not recover to ponderosa forests ever again. This makes the parts of the burn scar that burned at low and medium severity even more precious. In those areas, the USFS has an opportunity - and perhaps even a responsibility - to showcase the beneficial effects of a wildfire in a fire-adapted forests. However, this is only possible if the USFS can maintain and restore fire intervals to these areas. With deep appreciation and caution about the use of wildfire, the agency can do more to ensure that the burned forests are managed so well, that fire can be reintroduced more safely 5-10 years later. But that work must start now because it will take years of active fuels management and community trust building to get to that point.

Between the low- and medium-severity burn areas, plus unburned green islands, these are the areas of natural nucleation for reforestation into areas of high mortality from the fire (or locally adapted source cones for reforestation). Reforestation is incredibly resource-intensive, and we shouldn't ignore natural recruitment. On the contrary, we should encourage this trajectory by ensuring these living forests are thinned, slash/logs masticated or chipped (or logs removed), pile burns and eventually broadcast burns. These actions may be facilitated through interim road access (where access is not currently available), use of chainsaws in wilderness areas, and other approaches that allow for periodic and temporary management that encourage efficiency and expediency. The slow pace of prescribed burns in the Santa Fe National Forest is partly to blame for less than ideal conditions when HPCC was lit - there was pressure to burn even when conditions were not appropriate, and data was not up to date. There is now a window of opportunity to do things correctly. Please consider the purpose and spirit of regulation (e.g., no motorized equipment in wilderness areas to protect the primitive aspects of wilderness). If that wilderness burns in a catastrophic wildfire, there is nothing left to protect. So facilitate the protection of these sacred places through temporary and interim permissions to get some work done. Then get it done and get out.

Please don't ignore seasonality when cutting green trees. We are already seeing a massive influx of bark beetles. This was expected and we know we are going to see beetle kills. Please do not expedite or exacerbate this situation by cutting year-round and especially during the active beetle season. How about actually implementing best practices. I realize the federal government can move at a snail's pace sometimes, but if planning is done during the warm season so work scales up when beetles are dormant, that is the best practice, and you know it. And you can't leave logs decked for years and expect no impact. What's the point of science when it's ignored. Please do better - we know and can predict these things. USFS has done enough harm - pls show us you can do things correctly, practice science-informed actions, and if ever there was a time to embrace adaptive management, it is now. The ways things were before didn't work. Do better.

USFS has always been a steady employer for local students and community members. It hires local New Mexicans at a greater rate than most federal agencies and has contributed towards steady livelihoods. It is disappointing that the current hiring freeze is impacting the communities within the HPCC burn scar, as many have already seen their land-based livelihoods upended. If USFS wants to play a role in community recovery following the HPCC wildfire, then come through for work and employment for the local people. You can't burn up 341,000+ and then freeze hiring - who is going to implement the critical work of recovery then? Bring in local input for recovery actions and you will gain incremental buy in for the decades-long recovery ahead.

Lastly, USFS funds Wood Innovation grants which are great, but can you also consider establishing downstream demand for small-diameter products. E.g., it's great to have so much research on the benefits of biochar but BAER response does not include biochar treatments. Why not? If you believe that locals should start innovative businesses, especially in small rural communities located close to lots of wood products, then help us figure out

how to use up the stuff we need to get out of the forests. We have low density populations (limited customers), and extracting these low-quality materials is expensive (rocky slopes, hard to reach areas). That's a lot of upfront costs with no guarantee of a market. What about biochar wattles for post-fire restoration or other similar type products that would allow small business owners to take the leap, knowing that USFS has their backs.

Thank you for your consideration.