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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear U.S. Forest Service,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed "Sequoia and Sierra National Forests Prescribed Fire Project" and its potential impact on over 866,741 acres of designated Wilderness within these forests. This massive project threatens some of the most pristine and cherished Wilderness areas in America, including the Ansel Adams, Dinkey Lakes, John Muir, Kaiser, Kiavah, Monarch, South Sierra, Dome Land, Jennie Lakes, and Golden Trout Wildernesses.

While I recognize the role of fire in ecological processes, the scale and method proposed represent a significant human intervention that contradicts the fundamental principles of the 1964 Wilderness Act. The Act was designed to ensure that Wilderness is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions without unnecessary human interference. The use of helicopters and drones to ignite fires is especially troubling, as it further deviates from these principles.

During the initial scoping phase, public feedback, including significant input from thousands of Wilderness Watch's members and supporters, led to the inclusion of Alternative C-the Wilderness Exclusion Alternative-in the draft Environmental Assessment. Alternative C proposes to exclude all designated Wilderness and the recommended Monarch Wilderness-South addition-a total of 871,472 acres-from the prescribed fire project. This alternative aligns with the Wilderness Act's mandates and respects the ecological and intrinsic values of these areas.

Therefore, I urge the Forest Service to:

1. Adopt Alternative C as the Proposed Action for the project, to fully exclude all designated and recommended Wilderness areas from the burning and cutting plans.
2. Add the Moses Mountain Recommended Wilderness to Alternative C to ensure comprehensive protection of these sensitive areas.
3. Allow natural, lightning-caused fires to fulfill their ecological role in maintaining the landscape dynamics of these forests, rather than implementing large-scale human-driven interventions.

Preserving the integrity of Wilderness areas is crucial not only for the current generation but for future generations to come. I implore the Forest Service to reconsider the current proposed actions under the project and to commit to a strategy that upholds the spirit and letter of the Wilderness Act.

Thank you for considering this plea. I look forward to your positive response in favor of protecting these irreplaceable natural treasures.