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Comments: District Ranger Tina Cason:

Bear Trap Reforestation Project #67380

I am the project lead for the long-term Albuquerque Wildlife Federation riparian restoration project in Limestone Canyon which is adjacent to Bear Trap Canyon. We have previously conducted restoration activities in Bear Trap. We are broadly in support of the actions outlined in "Beartrap Reforestation Scoping 2025.pdf" and appreciate your diligent endeavors to keep the forest healthy.

The remainder of the comments are my own.

An extreme storm event in early August 2021 affected Bear Trap and Limestone Canyons, nine months before the fire mentioned in the scoping document. We visited Bear Trap on our way to Limestone on the evening of August 6th, 2021. We noted much of Bear Trap was severely eroded while Limestone, at least in our project area, had captured sediment and woody debris as well as spreading, slowing and sinking the storm flows. The scoping process could usefully discuss how potential severe storms may impact this and future projects.

The Bear Trap Fire occurred in May 2022, the Fisher Fire (which burned upper Limestone) in July 2024. There appears to be less vegetation, after the fires, on south facing slopes. These south facing slopes may have less capacity to hold moisture and may be less easy to reforest. The scoping process could discuss how reconnected floodplains, wetlands, wet meadows and healthy riparian zones impact the survival rates for plantings, especially on the south facing slopes which risk becoming scree. Local input and monitoring, perhaps through NM Tech, would be helpful.

We (different companions) visited the Bear Trap Campground and surrounds on March 13th and April 24, 2025. The erosion by the spring is severe. Despite that there are multiple stands of young cottonwood shoots, many more than 6 foot high, on the steep north facing slopes near the campground. We noted the presence of currant and gooseberry bushes. I appreciated the scoping document's sensitivity to the risks associated with road development.

I strongly support the proposed action to reforest severely burned areas with mixed conifers, including ponderosa and white pines, fir and blue spruce. I also support planting understory shrubs such as serviceberry, currants, gooseberry, hops and more. Perhaps the district could purchase some of the plants locally.

There is widespread appreciation for the work of the Magdalena Ranger District. I am especially thankful for the specialist skills of staff.

Sincerely,

Hamish