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Title:
Comments: Please see attached comment.
BlueRibbon Coalition/ShareTrails (BRC) is writing to provide feedback for the Creek Fire Restoration Project. BRC is a national non-profit organization that champions responsible recreation and encourages a strong conservation ethic and individual stewardship. We champion responsible use of public lands and waters for the benefit of all recreationists by educating and empowering our members to secure, protect, and expand shared outdoor recreation access and use by working collaboratively with natural resource managers and other recreationists. Our members use motorized and non-motorized means of recreation, including OHVs, horses, mountain bikes, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout the United States, including those of the Forest Service. Many of our members and supporters live in California or travel across the country to visit California and use motorized vehicles to access USFS managed lands throughout California. BRC members visit this land for motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, rockhounding, hunting, wildlife and nature study, camping, observing cultural resources, and other similar pursuits. BRC members and supporters have concrete, definite, and immediate plans to continue such activities in the future.Many of our members hold organized events that include organized rides in this area. A significant portion of the education mission of organizations like ours and the fundraising that supports organizations like ours comes from these organized events, and we see the continuation of these events as an integral expression of protected rights including freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.Project Specific CommentsBRC supports the broad project objectives to keep forests healthy and reduce the risk of wildland fires. We recommend using commercial treatment in the maximum amount of land possible. Best available science should be used in making these decisions. Past forest fires that have burned rampant because of the lack of forest projects should be looked at when making decisions. We strongly encourage the USFS to include the hazard abatement projects in implementation as these projects are necessary for the overall health and safety of the forest and the public.The plan states a possible method to use is prescribed burns. If this method is chosen for an area, and a wildfire arises at any point, that wildfire should be treated as such and the Forest Service should not allow the wildfire to burn in order to meet prescribed burn objectives. This involves a lot of risks and wildfires should always be treated with as much urgency to suppress the fire as possibleBRC commends the USFS in their efforts to have a sustainable and healthy forest for all to use while improving access and roads in the system. Oftentimes we see vegetation projects used as a method to close or decommission roads and we are happy to see that the Sierra National Forest recognizes the need to remove hazard trees to improve access. We are pleased to see in the EA that no roads will be decommissioned as a result of this project.Roads are crucial for various reasons, not only do they act as a natural wildfire barrier to help protect the forests and protect wildlife and habitat but are also needed for fire treatments and emergency response teams.The Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that in 2019 outdoor recreation brought in $459.8 billion. Outdoor recreation has only grown in popularity since then. BRC is pleased the USFS is not stifling potential economic benefits through road closures.Not only will the proposed projects benefit the economy by providing a conducive environment for outdoor recreation but will also bring in local revenue. BRC supports these efforts and supports any comments made by locals and members who approve these projects for local economic benefit.ConclusionWe would like to close by saying we support "shared use". As long as overall visitation numbers are appropriate for the affected resources, motorized and non-motorized users can be compatible with one another so long as individual users understand designations and plan their activities accordingly. Indeed, motorized and nonmotorized recreation use often overlap as OHV's often increase accessibility to non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking,camping, equestrian use, etc. We also hold that responsible recreational use of public lands can exist in harmony with ecosystem needs.BRC would like to be considered an interested public for this project. Information can be sent to the following address and email address: