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Submitted via email at: comments-southwestern-santafe@fs.fed.us

RE: Scoping Comments on the Santa Fe Mountains Landscape Resiliency Project

Dt: July 10, 2019

I live in Santa Fe and work as a teacher in the Santa Fe Public School system. I am writing with pressing concerns about the proposed Santa Fe Mountains Landscape Resiliency Project. Although these are not the only issues with this project, there are of particular importance to me personally as the basis for an urgent request that an EIS (Environmental Impact Study) be done before this project proceeds.

My first concern is that of air quality. As you may know, chemical accelerants are used to start the proposed prescribed burns in this project. Besides the toxic fallout from smoke itself, the air is also polluted with small particulate matter from these chemicals. Though apparently there has not been a full monitoring of the local impact of air pollution on our community from prescribed burns, it is a known fact that even short term exposure has harmful effects especially for those suffering from lung weakness and disease. Recent studies have also shown that it may likely have a negative effect on the cognitive development of children.

1. Xin Zhang et al., "The Impact of Exposure to Air Pollution on Cognitive Performance," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 155, no. 37, September 2018
2. Benjamin D. Horne, et al., "Short Term Elevation of Fine Particulate Matter Air Pollution and Acute Lower Respiratory Infection," *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 198, no. 6, September 2018

Secondly, this project includes going into roadless areas of the Santa Fe National Forest which will impact the environment and wildlife habitat. Although the Forest Service does not propose creating new roads and instead decommissioning some roads, they obviously will need to expand those roads to be used for burning and thinning to allow for equipment and traffic. This can potentially take away the eligibility of these areas as Wilderness, basically taking away that protection for the future. As cited in the Wilderness Act of 1964, (2a), such Wilderness areas are to "be administered for the enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character." A grave concern I have with going into these roadless areas, which are public lands, is that this project will actually open them up to further development, and possibly extraction as we are seeing with the recent mining exploration in the Santa Fe National Forest near Terrero. When attending a

Forest Service public meeting and presentation, I received no assurances from them that this is not the case.

1. "Mining Company Plans Drilling in Santa Fe National Forest", Associated Press, June 7, 2019

Thirdly, as you are aware, we are currently in the midst of climate disruption and already experiencing the effects of it. Current studies show the importance of preserving our forests as a way to mitigate even worse effects. By thinning away the natural diversity of our forest and cutting away its high canopy, we are actually heating the soil even more, creating drier conditions, let alone reducing the sequestering of carbon that trees provide. The Forest Service has not acknowledged that bigger and more frequent high-severity fires is a result of the climate disruption we are experiencing, not because of more undergrowth or accumulation of living and dead wood as they claim. In addition, this project does not work with natural processes to help the forest adapt to a warmer and drier climate, but in fact interferes with that. As we are confronted with climate disruption and the suffering it causes, which will only become more devastating in the near future, it is common sense - it is morally demanded - that we do whatever we can to mitigate those disastrous consequences and that suffering.

1. Craig D. Allen, David D. Bershears, and Nate G. McDowell, "On Underestimation of Global Vulnerability to Tree Mortality and Forest Die-off from Hotter Drought in the Anthropocene," *Ecosphere* 6, no. 8, August 2015
2. John T. Abatzoglou and A. Park Williams, "Impact of Anthropogenic Climate Change on Wildfire Across Western US Forests," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 113, no. 42, October 18, 2016
3. Seth Borenstein, "Wildfires Worse Due to Global Warming, Studies Say," Phys.org, May 18, 2014
4. "Deforestation and Its Extreme Effect on Global Warming, *Scientific American*
5. "US Forest Service Finds Global Forests Absorb One-Third of Carbon Emissions Annually," US Forest Service, July 4, 2011
6. Oliver Milman, "Scientists Say Halting Deforestation 'Just as Urgent' as Reducing Emissions", The Guardian, October 4, 2018

I am writing to you not only on behalf of my young students, and to all of us here now, but for the generations to come, urging that we preserve and protect the natural beauty and benefits of the Santa Fe National Forest, and its importance to our health and wellbeing and that of those to come. This is our highest responsibility.

I respectfully but urgently ask that an Environmental Impact Study be done to assure that all the issues, including those I raise here, be fully addressed and made publicly known as is required before this project proceeds.