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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Dear Mr. Melonas, and to his excellent staff, Genaro, Denis, Heidi, Hannah, Sandy, and others, I write in appreciation for the two presentations, their quality of being well prepared, and the sincerity of those who represented your department.

We too share the USDA Forest Service's appreciation of risk, but the risk is to the Earth's biosphere, to the species inherently valuable to its interdependent web. The Earth's life support system is primary, human well-being derivative. Sustaining habitats, supporting the community of trees ~ much of which lies beneath the soil in mycellium and mycorrhizal networking~ enables the forest ecology to survive, and consequently, carbon to stay in the ground. Human initiated fires in this time of unpredictably strong and erratic gusts of wind may slip from your control, release carbon, destroy the soil, and create conditions for flooding when the monsoons come.

Let's respect a compromise: thin only 50% of our forest, discriminately, so as to save endangered species such as the Southwestern white pine whose resilient examples are unique to our forests, the others having succumbed to rust. Protect wildlife habitats, for example the endangered Albert's squirrel with its pricked up pointy ears, or the spotted owl. Track the number of indicator species, such as the woodpecker, before you take down the aspens that serve for so many as homes. In sum, guarantee to us and to the Earth's ecosystems an Environmental Impact Statement before you proceed. How else can we believe in your commitment to a resilient forest in times of climate change?

Fire begun by man, dropped on the stacked piles of slash, releases chemicals, toxins, and heavy metals. Since your project promises to repeat these fires during the burning and clearing over this time and again every seven to ten years, we wonder why we moved from smoky California to the 8,000 feet Sangria de Cristo mountains! Gone will be the delineated landscapes, the fresh air to breathe, the amazing deep blue of the New Mexican skies.

Jobs for the Forest Service lie in protecting the forest's ecosystem, for a tree needs its community (Peter Wohlleben, the Hidden Life of Trees). Build zuni bowls to retain rainfall, collect the Ponderosa pinecones (so healthy and vigorous where we walk, in the logging trails up Forest Road 79) so to conserve the power to regenerate the pines, plant native and streamside vegetation to slow flood waters, to sequester carbon.

Put the Earth's well-being (for intense fires can promote life) before your own. We humans are but equal partners in this complex, self-adapting, self-organizing network that supports all life, human and nonhuman.