

July 6, 2019

James Melonas
Forest Supervisor
Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508

Re: Santa Fe Mountains Landscape Resiliency Project

The thinning of forests to stop the spread of wildfires is no longer a best practice fire prevention protocol, according to ecologist George Wuethner who was referencing a letter to Congress signed by 200 eminent scientists in 2018. I am asking, sir, why we should voluntarily subject ourselves to the fire danger experienced by much of California in late summer of last year, where the forests were already thin enough and much of the deforestation has, over the years, caused severe erosion of the land?

Damages caused by a controlled burn which resulted in the disastrous Cerro Grande fire of 2002 were upwards of \$2 billion and 400 families lost their homes. A 50,556-acre burn is not thinning our national treasure of forest - it is, in itself, an out-of-control burn vulnerable to high temperatures and the sudden rising of high velocity winds that are common in this part of the country, at this time of year. Given that you are familiar with the drought conditions typical of summer in this area and aware that the onset of a possible monsoon season brings danger of flooding, I am certain that your experience and your conscience would not allow ill-considered and uninformed outside interests to dictate policy in this area.

That the monsoon season is by no means a certainty in any year forces us to acknowledge that climate is no longer predictable. In high-temperature, low-moisture conditions, even a light wind could cause flame to jump from tree to tree and then burn hundreds of thousands of acres in just a few days. Small fires become infernos near or around Albuquerque, often. I've read that putting out carelessly snuffed campfires has created some challenges for your service already this year. I'm sure you are receiving a lot of criticism in the wake of this new federal project, but the forestry service has protected our watershed for years and I know that this responsibility you do not take lightly. The Santa Fe National Forest ecosystem is deserving of your continued protection and we need you to be even more creative in supporting it. Please consider that the full environmental impact statement requested by affected New Mexico communities would be helpful to you as well.

Sincerely,


Cheryl Bartlett

Santa Fe resident and community advocate, cbnmceh@gmail.com