

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 8/6/2019 12:00:00 AM

First name: Ellen

Last name: Gruskos

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Re: Scoping Comments for the Santa Fe Mountains Landscape Resiliency Project

Dear Mr. Melonas,

I add my voice to those asking you to protect the forests above Santa Fe by preparing an Environmental Impact Statement that acknowledges the significant cumulative impacts and scientific controversy of extensive clearing and burning over many decades.

Roadless forests above Santa Fe should be protected as Wilderness to stabilize the climate and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation critical to Santa Fe's economy. Clearing vegetation and burning in roadless areas does nothing to improve the safety of residents living adjacent to the forest. As a gardener I have a 1st hand experience of how hard it is here to regrow open areas exposed to harsh elements. We live in high desert, not in lush wet places where many studies were done.

Therefore, most old roads should be completely obliterated instead of improved for access by tree clearing equipment. Roads harm water supplies, degrade wildlife habitat, spread invasive plants and disease and allow access to arsonists and wildlife poachers. More and more people value real wilderness, it is a great economic asset.

Being in high desert where slow regrows is a fact, Instead of reducing risk, cleared areas may become more flammable by encouraging the growth of combustible grasses and opening forests to drying sunlight and wind. As a nurse, I witness daily how is public health negatively impacted by burning close to urban areas. There is no known safe level of exposure to small particulate matter in smoke. In addition, I am concerned about the cumulative exposure of people and wildlife to toxic fire accelerants.

It is difficult to provide meaningful comments due to the lack of site-specific information and the short 30 day comment period. Please provide more detail and easily accessible places and times to allow all segments of the population to participate and extend the comment period to 90 days.