



February 21, 2019

Senator Peter Wirth, District 25  
New Mexico Legislature, Rm. 119  
708 Paseo de Peralta  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
peter.wirth@nmlegis.gov

re: Withdraw SB 266 Forest and Watershed Restoration Act pending passage of  
HB 206 Environmental Review Act

Dear Senator Wirth:

We have several concerns with SB 266 Forest and Watershed Restoration Act that you are co-sponsoring with Representative Bandy.

The projects funded through the Act's forest land protection revolving fund would not be subject to environmental review. Nor is there a process for citizens to be informed and involved in the planning of these projects. Currently there are no New Mexico laws mandating environmental review. HB 206 Environmental Review Act before the Legislature may provide for such a review as well as allow for citizen involvement.

Therefore, we recommend that SB 266 be withdrawn until there is a comprehensive process to determine environmental impacts and mandate citizen involvement.

Environmental review would help resolve important restoration issues. For example, evidence suggests that logged forests are more susceptible to fire than Wilderness, National Parks and roadless areas. This may be because intensive tree removal creates kindling-like debris that allows fires to spread faster and enables combustible invasive weeds like cheatgrass to grow in the openings.

Another issue that should be given a hard look is the Act's promotion of burning biomass for energy production. Biomass facilities produce significantly more greenhouse gases than coal-generated or gas powered facilities and can cost up to five times as much as wind and solar. In addition, without costly pollution controls, burning biomass threatens the public health of already-disadvantaged communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and support for New Mexico's forests and watershed.

Sincerely,

*/Sam Hitt/*

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cc: Rep. Paul C. Bandy, District 3