Santa Fe Municipal Watershed. Cut once and burned twice.

QUESTIONS

This project is of unprecedented size, lacks specific details, impacts inventoried roadless areas eligible for Wilderness, improves nearly 100 miles of road to transport heavy equipment and lacks meaningful discussion of climate impacts. Here are some question to ask about the project. Comments due July 10. Email to: comments-southwestern-santafe@fs.fed.us

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PURPOSE AND NEED/NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT
* Why isn't protecting lives and property the primary purpose of this project? Making vulnerable homes fire-safe and clearing flammable vegetation immediately around structures are proven strategies.
* Will measures to protect soils, water quality and wildlife habitat be mandatory and enforceable if they are proposed in an Environmental Assessment?

ROADLESS FORESTS AND ROAD IMPROVEMENT
* How many inventoried roadless areas exist in this area? Will they be proposed for Wilderness in the new forest plan?
* Improving roads will increase human caused fires in this area. Does the SFNF have the capacity of responding to this increase?
* How will road decommissioning "restore" unneeded roads? Shouldn't unneeded roads be obliterated to protect water quality and wildlife habitat?
* How will ATVs be effectively restricted from newly improved roads?

CLIMATE DISRUPTION
* Is the Forest Service allowed to discuss the role that unregulated human emissions play in creating a hotter and drier climate in the Southwest? If so, why isn't it discussed?
* Is current climate science being used to analyze the impacts of clearing trees and annual burning?
* Why isn't climate change mentioned as the primary driver of larger and more frequent high-severity fires, not fuels?
* Why is the aim of this project to restore past forest structure instead of working with natural succession and evolutionary processes to help the forest adapt to a warmer and drier climate?

WILDLIFE AND ANCIENT FORESTS
* How will wildlife corridors be maintained in areas cleared and annually burned?
* Will clearing and burning be restricted in the spring to protect breeding bird nests and other wildlife?
* Old growth aspen is important breeding bird habitat. Clearing and burning conifers in the understory will cause significant harm. Will bird populations in old growth aspen habitat be monitored to determine impacts?
* Why are the threats of high severity fire to Mexican spotted owl habitat highlighted while it's benefits and the adaptability of the owl to burned forest habitat not discussed?
* Why is retaining lowest amount allowed of old growth the aim of this project when the forest plan requires as much old growth be set aside as possible?
* Preservation of old growth and fuel reduction have conflicting aims. How will old growth forests with their dense multistoried and high canopy cover be maintained on a minimum of 20% of the project area?

CLEARING TREES AND ANNUAL BURNING
* How many live trees will remain after the initial clearing and burning? How many remainder trees are expected to die in prescribed fires and subsequent wind-throw in newly opened stands?
* Will the legally required regeneration standards for remainder trees be monitored? If so will that data publicly available?
* Will the size of burned debris piles be limited to protect soils and discourage invasive plants from becoming established?
* Why will spruce/fir and piñon/juniper forests with mixed-severity fir regimes receive the same treatment as ponderosa pine and dry mixed conifer forests with low-severity fir regimes?
* Why are protection measures for the currently secure but vulnerable Southwestern White Pine population not discussed? Will you cut down genetically resistant white pines before it can be determined their value in countering white pine blister rust?
* Will on-going livestock grazing impede the goal of restoring low-severity fire regimes?
* Reference conditions are mentioned as being used to establish a desired forest structure. Please identify the reference sites in the project's Colorado Mountains ecoregion.