



May 10, 2019

Mr. James Melonas, Supervisor
USDA Forest Service
Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508
delivery via email: jmelonas@fs.fed.us

re: request for 90 days to comment on the Santa Fe Mountains Forest Resiliency Project

Dear James:

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA encourage federal agencies to set time limits appropriate for proposed actions §1501.8. Some of the factors to consider in making this decision include the potential for environmental harm §1501.8(b)(1)(i), size of the proposed action §1501.8(b)(1)(ii) and the degree to which the action is controversial §1501.8(b)(1)(ii). In consideration of these factors, we respectfully request 90 days as the minimum needed for citizens to review potential impacts of the proposed Santa Fe Mountains Forest Resiliency project.

The Santa Fe Mountains Forest Resiliency Project is of unprecedented size; at 50,000 acres it is the largest single vegetation clearing and burning project ever proposed on the Santa Fe National Forest.

The project will cause significant harm to unique social and ecological values and a host of irreplaceable resources, including: 1) inventoried roadless areas and lightly roaded areas which make up the vast majority of the project area; 2) ancient forest habitat critical to maintaining abundant fish and wildlife populations; 3) unfragmented forests that provide biological strongholds for

imperiled species and serve as a bulwark against the spread of invasive species; 4) unparalleled opportunities for outdoor recreation critical to the local economy; 5) Native American sacred sites needed to maintain traditional spiritual and religious practices; and 6) clean drinking water for downstream human communities and wildlife. Most importantly, clearing vegetation and burning in the backcountry does nothing to improve the safety of residents living adjacent to the Santa Fe national forest.

In addition, this project is highly controversial. A lawsuit was filed in August of 2018 seeking an Environmental Impact Statement to analyze and disclose the cumulative impacts of the Hyde Park and Pacheco Canyon projects which are contiguous to this much larger project. The same controversial actions are shared by both — namely the degradation of roadless areas long proposed for Wilderness designation.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

/Sam Hitt/

Sam Hitt, President
Santa Fe Forest Coalition
P.O. Box 1943,
Santa Fe, NM 87504 sam@wildwatershed.org

cc:

Senator Tom Udall
Senator Martin Heinrich
Congressman Ben Ray Lujan
Christopher B. French, Acting Deputy Chief, National Forest System
Cal Joyner, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region
Hannah Bergemann, SFNF Public Information Officer