

## Santa Fe Forest Coalition

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### Trees Prevent Desertification

We all know rain helps trees, but many don't realize trees help the rain to come - they are interdependent. It's the cycle of life. Trees provide water for both surrounding vegetation and the clouds above. Scientists have discovered that air traveling over forested areas become laden with moisture - air traveling over dry areas stays dry.

Many countries that have taken down their trees en masse for industrialization have found that ground temperatures increase, soil dries out and the process of desertification takes hold. Countries such as India and Kenya are now reversing their tree removal and planting millions of trees. We already have the trees, let's keep them and help the rain to come!

### What can you do to help save our forest?

PLEASE email and/or call elected Representatives and the Forest Service and tell them it is your right to have an EIS completed for the entire Fireshed tree cutting and prescribed burn program, including Hyde Park and Pacheco Canyon. Your voice counts, it's our forest. Trees are alive and the forest is life! Help save our forest.

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*"In wildness is the preservation of the world."*

- Henry David Thoreau

### What's happening to our forest?

The US Forest Service is planning to do a large-scale tree removal program across much of the local Santa Fe National Forest from north of Tesuque through Glorieta, an area they call the "Fireshed". Projects typically call for cutting out over 90% of existing trees. Why?

The Forest Service says this will help keep communities and the watershed safer from fire, and improve the health and resilience of the forest. Current research does not support this view - large-scale tree removal does little to reduce the effects of fire and past Forest Service fuel treatments have caused severe ecological damage to our forest. This damage only gets worse as the climate gets warmer and drier.

The Forest Service also plans to do widespread prescribed burns. These smoky low temperature fires contain toxic chemical accelerants such as potassium permanganate, gas, and diesel, are harmful to the health of people and animals, and can cause debilitating health impacts to sensitive individuals. Also, prescribed burns such as the Cerro Grande fire can and do go out of control and cause massive damage.



## SANTA FE FOREST COALITION



### IS THIS REALLY THE ANSWER?

Help save our Forest! The Forest Service is planning to cut down the majority of trees in our local Santa Fe National Forest, supposedly for fire mitigation and forest health. Newer research suggests the opposite can be true, that these treatments cause immense environmental damage and destroy the natural beauty we all enjoy.

Santa Fe Forest Coalition, with other environmental organizations, is asking the Forest Service to do an Environmental Impact Statement before proceeding with this massive project that may irrevocably damage the health and ecology of Santa Fe National Forest.

## Does large-scale forest tree removal protect us from fire?

No! A recent forest fire research study shows that forests where large-scale tree removal treatments have been done do not burn less frequently or less severely than untreated forests, and in fact burn more often and more severely. When large numbers of trees are removed and the tree canopy is opened up, the forest becomes drier and more flammable, and when fire does break out, wind can blow intensely through a more open forest and fan up flames. Also, the probability that a fire will encounter any functional fuel treatment is exceedingly low, and the effects of fuel treatments only last for 10+ years.

There will be more fires as the climate becomes warmer and drier, but most forest fuel treatments do not reduce the impacts of fires significantly, so we should just protect our homes and other important values.

The US Forest Service's most eminent researcher, Jack Cohen, who for decades studied how to protect homes in Wildland/Urban Interface communities from fire, concluded that the right way to protect forest community homes from fire is by fire-proofing the 100 foot radius around homes, mostly by the removal of fine fuels.



This will not keep us safer from the effects of fire.

## What is the effect of large-scale tree removal on the health and resilience of our forest?

Removing the vast majority of the trees from the forest severely damages and disrupts forest ecology. It also releases carbon sequestered by the trees and in soils, which contributes to drought and climate warming.

The heavy machinery and vehicles used in fuel treatment projects tear up the forest floor and causes soils to compact and erode. Native grasses and shrubs often do not come back and are replaced by invasive weeds. Wildlife is killed in the process and their habitats disrupted and destroyed. Trees that are not removed often become unhealthy and combined with the detrimental effects of the slash that is left behind sometimes for years, bark beetle and other tree diseases can break out, killing even more trees. Water quality is degraded by the eroding soil causing sediment to flow into waterways.

All this creates an unhealthy forest that is not resilient and takes away our opportunities to find beauty, peace, balance and enjoyment in a relatively healthy and intact forest.



La Cueva forest thinned 8 years ago, slash left on the ground, forest health never recovered.

## What is the Forest Service required to do to analyze the impacts of tree removal programs?

The Forest Service is required by US environmental law (NEPA) to do an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before they undertake impactful large-scale fuel treatment programs, in order to cumulatively analyze all the potential impacts and to avoid environmental disasters. An EIS requires the Forest Service to mitigate any adverse impacts projects may cause. An EIS also addresses the needs of the public, and fully includes the public in project planning.

So far, the Forest Service has said they don't have to do an EIS. Instead, they want to do much less analysis. That's not good enough, they have caused way too much damage in our forest already, and with little benefit.

We must require them to do an EIS for the entire Fireshed program, including the first two Fireshed projects, Hyde Park and Pacheco Canyon that have only been minimally analyzed despite being located largely in Roadless Areas, which are meant to be highly protected. The Forest Service plans to start cutting down the trees in Hyde Park, a popular hiking area and treasured bird sanctuary, in the fall. We can't let this happen!



Another nearby Forest Service project, this is what our beloved Hyde Park area and trails will look like!